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THE Nation.

LABOR WAR IN THE MOJAVE

GLOBAL SOLIDARITY VS. RIO TINTO

MIKE DAVIS

MARCH 29, 2010
TheNation.com

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My Life with the Taliban

Abdul Salam Zaeef

Translated from the Pashto and Edited & Introduced by Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn

Foreword by Barnett R. Rubin

Columbia/Hurst

"A book that for the first time places readers at the heart of the Taliban's way of thinking ... beautifully translated and extensively edited for easier understanding."
— *New York Review of Books*

"Full of insights on who the Taliban are and how they came about ... should be required reading for anyone with an interest in the region."
— *The Sunday Times (London)*

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Letters

C'mon, California… 14 Little Words!

NAPA, CALIF.
"*State Races Matter*," says John Nichols in "A 2010 Elections Primer" [March 1]. Indeed they do. And when the November 2010 dust settles, California's legislature is likely to have just enough Republicans to exercise the tyranny of the minority on state budget and revenue matters. We need to end the antidemocratic "two-thirds" rules here so we can start closing the tax loopholes enjoyed by corporate interests and the wealthiest Californians. The California Democracy Act will eliminate the means by which a small minority of right-wing legislators—who put corporations and the wealthy above the vast majority of Californians; who gridlock the budget process year after year; and who block funding for education, social services and infrastructure—have done just that for more than thirty years. Our proposition is just fourteen simple words: "All legislative actions on revenue and budget must be determined by a majority vote." Go to CA4Democracy.com.
JOANNE GIFFORD

Looting Haiti's Vaults

NEW YORK CITY
Naomi Klein's "Haiti: A Creditor, Not a Debtor" [March 1] was right on—and about—the money. She highlighted four reasons Haiti deserves reparations: slavery, US occupation, dictatorship and climate change. This debt to Haiti was spelled out clearly in a report issued by the Foreign Policy Association in 1922, a committee that included NAACP stalwart Moorfield Storey and future Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter. According to the report, in 1914 US Marines landed at Port-au-Prince, "proceeded to the vaults of the National Bank of Haiti, and forcibly seized and carried away $500,000." This marked the beginning of a military occupation that continued until 1934 and an economic control that remains unbroken.
HERB BOYD

letters@thenation.com

NPR's Faux (Fox) Pas

SAN JOSE, CALIF.
Thank you, Eric Alterman. Finally, someone is saying what needs to be said about NPR ["Zinn-ophobia at NPR," March 1]. I heard the broadcast on the death of Howard Zinn and was astonished that the ever-paranoiac David Horowitz was asked to chime in. Alterman points out that NPR never bends over backward like this when a conservative dies (say, Gen. Al Haig); it just lights the votives and gets Juan Williams to wax nostalgic. The public stations had some cred years ago. Now they are bought and paid for. I call them Fox lite.
TIM RYAN

ASHEVILLE, N.C.
It is a mistake to define Howard Zinn solely as a historian and writer. I agree with Eric Alterman's assessment of NPR's ridiculous Fox-like inclusion of David Horowitz to analyze Howard Zinn's career. But Alterman misses the point: Zinn was first and foremost an activist. He spoke out bravely, gave his time continually to justice movements and marched with us on the street right up to the end of his life. Whether his analysis was "overly schematic and simplistic" is of little concern to the activists who can only afford to read his book at the end of the day. It was the actions of his life, and not merely his words, that made Howard Zinn a man of the people.
STACK KENNY

SACRAMENTO
Although I appreciate Eric Alterman's takedown of David Horowitz, I take issue with his snarky remarks about Zinn's life's work. Alterman surely knows that 99 percent of academic historians would not deign to mingle with the great unwashed by participating in protests or civil disobedience. Zinn's activism set him apart. Even as an assistant prof he took courageous stands for civil rights and peace that threatened his career. And "ideologically driven"? Compared

(continued on page 24)

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Lawyers, Terror & Torture

In this profoundly dispiriting season of partisan guerrilla warfare, we have grown all too accustomed to unfounded and nakedly cynical attacks on the Obama administration from the Republican Party and its supporters. Still, matters reached a new low recently when Dick Cheney's daughter Liz and her Keep America Safe organization triggered a witch hunt by posting a video suggesting that lawyers now in the Justice Department who had previously represented Guantánamo detainees are unpatriotic and not to be trusted. The department did not help matters by at first declining to name the lawyers when asked their identities. It had nothing to hide. It should have identified and celebrated them, explaining (since it apparently needs repeating) that the American adversarial system depends on just such courageous conduct from lawyers willing to defend the least popular among us.

COMMENT

Liz Cheney's attack is scurrilous and has been condemned not only by the *New York Times* editorial page and former Solicitor General Walter Dellinger but by prominent conservatives such as Ken Starr and several Bush administration lawyers, including former Attorney General Michael Mukasey and former Deputy Attorney General Larry Thompson.

Even Charles Stimson, Bush's deputy assistant secretary of defense for detainee affairs, has joined the chorus of critics. Stimson should know. He earned his fifteen minutes of fame by suggesting in 2007 that corporate clients of law firms representing Guantánamo detainees should make the firms "choose between representing terrorists or representing reputable firms." Stimson had to resign as a result of his remarks. Having learned his lesson, he has signed a Brookings Institution letter condemning Cheney's attacks.

Others are undeterred. Former Bush speechwriter Marc Thiessen, author of a vacuous book defending torture who has been awarded a weekly platform by the *Washington Post*, used his column to decry those who criticized the attackers, asking, "Where was the moral outrage when fine lawyers like John Yoo, Jay Bybee, David Addington, Jim Haynes, Steve Bradbury and others came under vicious personal attack?"

Thiessen appears not to see the difference. Those who defended Guantánamo detainees sought to uphold the rule of law; indeed, several worked on the cases in which the Supreme Court rejected Bush's contention that Guantánamo was beyond the law. (Should the High Court justices' patriotism also be questioned?) The Bush lawyers Thiessen named, by contrast, all played a role in authorizing torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment—war crimes. Thiessen is not a lawyer, but that doesn't excuse his inability to understand the basic distinction between defending someone locked up for years without charges and authorizing war crimes by manipulating the law to bless illegality. The former is an indispensable feature of our American tradition; the latter is morally and constitutionally indefensible.

Cheney's attack and Thiessen's defense are so baseless they can be understood only as partisan demagoguery, designed to take the focus off the real culprits—among them Liz Cheney's father and Thiessen's former colleague, Dick Cheney, who authorized waterboarding, sleep deprivation, slamming detainees into walls and forcing them into painful stress positions. These crimes resulted in little useful intelligence, gave a propaganda gift to Al Qaeda and erected a major stumbling block to holding terrorists accountable for their crimes.

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The scandal is not that lawyers who defended the rule of law are now in the Justice Department but that lawyers in President Bush's Justice Department, with senior members of his cabinet, authorized war crimes and have thus far been given a free pass. The latest development is that the department will not refer Yoo and Bybee, who wrote two 2002 memos authorizing torture, to their state bars for disciplinary action. The Justice ethics office wrote a scathing report concluding that both men had violated their professional obligations to provide objective and independent advice. But David Margolis, a senior Justice official, vetoed the referral, saying that they merely used "poor judgment."

The question Americans need to ask is not whether a Justice Department lawyer in an earlier job defended the Constitution on behalf of an unpopular client. Rather, we should be asking why the government adopted a deliberate program of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and has not held anyone accountable, apologized to the victims or acknowledged its wrongdoing. That is the real scandal. DAVID COLE

David Cole, The Nation*'s legal affairs correspondent, is the author, most recently, of* The Torture Memos: Rationalizing the Unthinkable.

Banking for the People

Even if financial services reforms are finally enacted at the federal level, it is unlikely they will create a banking system that serves the interests of Main Street America or the great mass of citizens who do the work and pay the taxes yet reap few of the benefits of this nation's immense wealth. But what if that great mass of citizens owned the banks?

COMMENT

That's a question that a growing number of candidates and legislators across the country are answering with proposals to create state-owned banks. Though these initiatives borrow from an old model—North Dakota has run a successful state bank since 1919—they are a response to a new reality: the hundreds of billions of public dollars plowed into big banks by the federal bailout have done little to free credit for job creation or economic development in recession-ravaged communities. So, taking a cue from Nobel Prize–winning economist Joseph Stiglitz and other critics of private-bank bailouts, latter-day populists are proposing to put public money to work for the public good.

Oregon Democratic gubernatorial candidate Bill Bradbury is calling for the creation of a Bank of Oregon, which would keep money in the state and invest in sustainable development. "It is time to declare economic sovereignty from the multinational banks that are responsible for much of our current economic crisis," says the former State Senate president and secretary of state. "Every year we ship over a billion dollars in Oregon taxpayer dollars to out-of-state and multinational banks in the form of deposits, only to see that money invested elsewhere. It's time to put our money to work for Oregonians."

Michigan's Virg Bernero, a leading candidate for the Democratic nomination for governor in that hard-hit state, is another public-banking proponent. "We can break the credit

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Noted.

A STARK COMPARISON: Suppose the chairmanship of a key committee in the House went, via the seniority system, to a senior Republican with a rock-solid conservative voting record and a reputation for getting major legislation passed. Suppose this Congressman was also an unapologetic brawler on behalf of conservative causes—so much so that he had wrangled aggressively and sometimes controversially with liberal Democrats. Republicans would, of course, embrace their new champion and dismiss criticism of him as cheap shots from the opposition. That's because the GOP is all about advancing its agenda, not merely managing the status quo.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of House Democrats. After New York Congressman **Charles Rangel** stepped aside for an ethics inquiry, the chairmanship of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee was expected to go to California Congressman **Pete Stark**, a nineteen-term progressive stalwart with a record of shaping and passing legislation that reformed tax policy, established the COBRA health continuation benefit for displaced workers and expanded access to Medicare and Medicaid. There was an immediate outcry from the right, which recalled that Stark has directed blistering barbs at Republican colleagues, who he argued were unconcerned about the poor, and at former President **George W. Bush**, who he argued was unconcerned about the death and destruction in Iraq. The horror! Democrats scrambled to replace Stark with a more cautious player, Michigan's **Sander Levin**, as the Californian gracefully announced he would remain as chair of the subcommittee on health. Heaven forbid that the Democratic Party would place a boisterous battler for economic and social justice, peace and equality in one of Washington's most powerful positions. JOHN NICHOLS

NO HEROES: In early February *The Nation* called attention to a brewing scandal in Ukraine. Outgoing President **Viktor Yushchenko**, the dioxin-pockmarked hero of the Orange Revolution, decided to grant a highly controversial Nazi collaborator, **Stepan Bandera**, "Hero of Ukraine" status, a state honor. It was one of the last decisions the deeply unpopular leader made during his disastrous five-year term. By honoring an ultranationalist whose forces ethnically cleansed tens of thousands of Jews and Poles, Yushchenko poisoned relations with neighboring Poland and Russia; caused outrage among international Jewish groups like the **Simon Wiesenthal Center**, as well as among Ukrainian Jews; and most ominous, ripped open nascent tensions between dominant ethnic Ukrainians and the large Russian-speaking minority, which has long feared the rise of ethnic Ukrainian chauvinism.

Then in late February, on the same day that Ukraine inaugurated a new president, **Viktor Yanukovych**, the European Parliament passed a resolution condemning the honor for Bandera. The resolution was put forward by Poland—which had been the main supporter of the Orange Revolution and Yushchenko, and is now its leading critic.

Unfortunately, it's almost impossible for Americans to make sense of these events—we're still stuck in the narrative circa 2004, when the Orange Revolution was wrongly portrayed by the media as a triumph of American values over the forces of Kremlin imperialism. The result is that Washington remains silent, paralyzed by its unwillingness to admit its mistakes, while the leading print media continue to get it all wrong. A belated **New York Times** article on the Bandera controversy—"'Hero of Ukraine' Splits Nation, Inside and Out"—frames the controversy as nothing more than Russian bullying led by Prime Minister **Vladimir Putin**, who "predictably lashed out" at an innocent expression of "individuality." Not a single Polish or Jewish representative is quoted, and their grievances are mentioned almost in passing. It was even worse at the **Washington Post**, whose editorial on February 9 came to the bizarre conclusion that the Orange Revolution was the big winner in Ukraine's elections, and Russia the big loser—as if it were still 2004 and this was all just a proxy cold war battle between America and Russia.

And still the United States is officially silent about the episode: requests for comments from the vice president's office, the State Department and Congress members with a history of support for Orange Revolution leaders went unanswered. Add Ukraine to America's depressingly long list of foreign policy failures. MARK AMES

PAYING FOR PEACE: Service has been a keynote of President Obama's rhetoric since his campaign, and yet one of America's oldest service organizations continues to struggle. The Peace Corps, which celebrated its forty-ninth anniversary in early March, is experiencing an influx of applicants coupled with a stagnation of resources. Last year more than 15,000 people applied to the corps, marking an 18 percent increase from the year before. Despite this, the corps had the financial resources to place only 4,000 hopefuls, for a total of 7,700 accepted volunteers in the field. In conjunction, more than a dozen new countries have requested programs and many active programs have requested extra volunteers.

During his campaign, Obama pledged to double the number of active volunteers in the Peace Corps by its fiftieth anniversary. He requested $446 million in the 2011 budget for the corps. While this represents an increase from last year, it falls far short of what will be needed if Obama is to keep his promise. More than fifty volunteers from **MorePeaceCorps**, a national legislative outreach campaign, descended on Washington recently to lobby for more robust funding. Their goal was to encourage members of Congress to sign a letter to the state and foreign operations appropriations subcommittee, which is responsible for the Peace Corps's budget. The House letter, written by five returned Peace Corps volunteers—Representatives **Mike Honda**, **Tom Petri**, **Steve Driehaus**, **Sam Farr** and **John Garamendi**—requests $465 million. A letter in the Senate, from Peace Corps alum **Chris Dodd**, requests an increase without a specific dollar value. Last year, a similar House letter with ninety-seven signatures (the most of any letter in the 111th Congress to any appropriations subcommittee) enjoyed bipartisan support. This year's letter will be open for signatures until mid-March, and advocates hope it can surpass previous successes. LAUREN NORTH

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crunch and beat Wall Street at their own game by keeping our money right here in Michigan and investing it to retool our economy and create jobs," says the populist mayor of Lansing. In Illinois, Green Party gubernatorial nominee Rich Whitney, who won 10 percent of the statewide vote in 2006, proposes depositing all state tax revenues and pension contributions in a state bank. "Instead of using state funds as a means to further enrich private banks, a state-owned bank could earn additional revenue for the state while at the same time help spur economic development in Illinois," he argues.

It is not just candidates who are talking up bold remedies to the challenges created and perpetuated by "too big to fail" banks. Legislators from Vermont to Virginia, from Michigan to Washington State, are proposing to start state banks. They take inspiration from the Bank of North Dakota, created ninety-one years ago by radical Non-Partisan Leaguers to serve as the depository for all state tax collections and fees. The nation's only state-owned bank avoided subprime lending and the derivatives markets during the recent real estate bubble and now has $4 billion under management. It maintains the faith of its founders and, in the words of bank president Eric Hardmeyer, continues to "plow those deposits back into the state of North Dakota in the form of loans. We invest back into the state in economic development type of activities." What that means, according to Ellen Brown, author of the book *Web of Debt*, is that North Dakota has avoided the credit freeze "by creating its own credit [and] leading the nation in establishing state economic sovereignty."

That sounds good to Massachusetts Senate president Therese Murray, who wants her state to look into creating its own bank. Washington House finance committee vice chair Bob Hasegawa, a Seattle Democrat, has formally proposed a State Bank of Washington. "Imagine financing student aid, infrastructure, industry and community development. Imagine providing access to capital for small businesses, or otherwise leveraging our resources instead of having to do it with tax incentives," he says. "Imagine keeping our resources local instead of exporting them as profits, never to be seen again—that's what this bank could do."

The movement to create state-run banks is part of a broader push to put public money to work for the people. In Los Angeles the City Council voted unanimously on March 5 to ensure that taxpayer money is invested only in banks that have established track records of helping families stay in their homes, lending to small businesses that create jobs and eschewing toxic interest-rate "swaps" that saddle communities with excessive fees and interest rates. Pennsylvania's auditor general, Jack Wagner, is leading a campaign in that state to get local governments and school boards to stop risking public funds with investment banks that engage in deals Wagner describes as "tantamount to gambling with public money." Urging these initiatives on is the Service Employees International Union, which is waging a national campaign to stop investing in unaccountable banks. "It's time for Wall Street banks to stop focusing on their profits and start doing their part to help our cities and families recover," says SEIU secretary-treasurer Anna Burger.

The prospect of what might be done with all the money that has flowed from the federal Treasury to private banks has some players talking of taking the North Dakota model national. At a *Nation* magazine "Meltdown" event a year ago, Stiglitz suggested, "If we had used the $700 billion to create a new financial institution, allowed it to lever 10 to 1, which is very modest compared to the 30 to 1 that we were doing—10 to 1 would have generated $7 trillion of new lending capacity, far in excess of what our country needs. So the issue here is not about lending. It's really about saving the bankers. And what we confused was saving the banks versus saving the bankers and their shareholders." Yet as Washington struggles with the task of imposing basic regulation on big banks, the action will be in the states. How likely is that? Hardmeyer used to doubt that the North Dakota model would ever be adopted elsewhere. Now, he says, "when I look around the country, it's not quite as far a leap as I once thought it was." JOHN NICHOLS

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

Future Governor Races in New York; A Voter Speaks

Our sights have been lowered.
Our backing is firm
For anyone likely
To serve out his term.

Chile Shaking

The most treacherous aftershock of Chile's devastating earthquake was the yawning divide between rich and poor—a fissure that has been mostly papered over by several decades of denial and delusion. One needed look no further than the Twitter torrent gushing from the broken country within hours of the temblor. As swarms of desperate Chileans sacked and emptied the shelves of every market and pharmacy in the hardest-hit, isolated southern region, there was a virtual tsunami of tweets, laden with class- and race-charged epithets, demanding that the army shoot to kill all "delinquents," along with a flurry of nostalgic pleas for a return to military dictatorship.

COMMENT

Indeed, with the veneer of social order crumbling almost as fast as the half-million to 1.5 million homes of wood, adobe and other substandard materials, outgoing President Michelle Bachelet ordered tank regiments and thousands of combat troops into the affected areas, producing chilling scenes, reminiscent of the Pinochet era, of nervous conscripts pointing their rifles at the backs of detained "vandals." At one point an eighteen-hour-a-day curfew was clamped down on the battered city of Concepción, as if its population were suspects rather than victims.

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Fed up with the Blue Dogs?

HELP SEND DR. DAVID GILL TO CONGRESS!

An independent-minded true progressive leader

Dear Fellow *Nation* Reader,

My name is **David Gill**, and I am the Democratic U.S. House candidate in Illinois' 15th District, challenging a five-term entrenched Republican. My grassroots campaign accepts no corporate donations.

During two previous campaigns, thanks in large part to readers of *The Nation*, I have developed a nationwide network of progressive support. This year we are riding a wave of discontent with incumbents, disillusionment with broken promises of real change, and disgust with obstructionist career politicians bought and sold by big corporations.

As an Emergency Room doctor and a **longtime member of Physicians for a National Health Program**, I bear witness daily to the desperate need for **Universal Health Care** for every American. We must adopt **sustainable energy policies** and develop **green energy jobs** to revive our economy. We must focus on **educating our children** and **retraining millions of unemployed adults** to compete in the global economy. We must **rid our electoral process of unlimited corporate funding** and push for publicly financed campaigns. We must **end our involvement** in wasteful and destructive foreign wars.

My campaign continues to gain momentum, but "Gill 2010" needs funds to take its message to the voters. **If you share my values**, I would greatly appreciate your support. Your generous gift today will go far toward returning integrity and common sense to our government.

Sincerely,
David Gill, M.D.

www.gill2010.com

For more information or to **donate online**, please visit www.gill2010.com

clip & tear

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Despite the military response, Bachelet's center-left government and leaders of the conservative opposition all initially underplayed the scope of the disaster. Bachelet wavered thirty-six hours before declaring an official state of catastrophe, and she balked at pleading for significant international aid—a mistake that could cost hundreds of millions. Even the Chilean navy fumbled a tsunami warning for a stretch of the southern coast, possibly costing many lives.

The attitude of exaggerated national pride was perfectly consistent with the barrage of statements from all quarters expressing either feigned or naïve shock that so many Chileans would take advantage of the disaster to loot. After all, Chile has been laboring under a dangerous myth—fostered by the Pinochet dictatorship, then amplified during the ensuing twenty years of democratic government—that the country has somehow left behind the Third World. Having long fancied itself "the Switzerland of South America," in more recent times Chile was dubbed an economic "jaguar," the hemispheric cousin to the Asian "tigers."

Nothing could be further from the truth. At the point of bayonets and backed by tanks and torture chambers, Pinochet imposed a dog-eat-dog "free market" on a country that once boasted one of the most developed social safety nets in the hemisphere. It was a bonanza for the elites, who further prospered during the Christian Democratic/Socialist partnership that has governed since 1990. Booming copper prices and heightened export of nonrenewable resources have helped reduce Chile's poverty rate from 40 percent to 14 percent and have raised per capita income, but inequality is still high. The wealthiest quintile of Chileans rake in about half of national income while the bottom 20 percent earn only 5 percent. Chile proudly sprouts computers, cellphones and American-style fast-food joints, but walk into any Santiago store and you'll find basic commodities like shoes, shirts and pants sold on twelve-month installment plans—at 30 percent interest. The country's university system has been mostly privatized, and its antiquated K-12 system has been compared to an apartheid model that blocks social mobility.

More than a few analysts saw the post-quake looting as driven in part by necessity and in part, perhaps, by revenge. After watching the rich get richer for decades, the bottom half saw that it was finally their time, if only for a moment. If the elites could gorge thanks to a lawless military dictatorship, what was the crime in smashing a window to grab some milk—or for that matter a plasma TV?

Some leveling of the playing field during her four-year presidency—including investment in housing and some pension reform—earned termed-out Socialist Bachelet extremely high popularity ratings. But that wasn't enough to stop an electoral victory earlier this year by right-wing billionaire Sebastián Piñera—the first time a conservative had been elected president since 1958. So tired were Chileans of the ineffectiveness of the Concertación in producing social change, they elected the man least likely to give it to them. Desperate people commit desperate acts—at, and away from, the polls.

Piñera and his cabinet come into office with an advantage and a disadvantage. A poll released right before his inauguration by the conservative daily *El Mercurio* found that 72 percent of Santiagoans believe the Bachelet government responded late and ineffectively to the quake. Those numbers mean Piñera faces heightened expectations. Committed to shrinking the state, he takes office at a moment when escalated government spending and state-backed reconstruction programs will be more necessary than ever to maintain an apparently paper-thin social peace.

As Piñera prepared for his inauguration, the wealthy were seen in Santiago supermarkets hoarding food and other necessities. In the poorer, more racially mixed and quake-devastated south, there were still some towns with no functioning supermarkets. On the one-week anniversary of the quake, the entire nation came together in one more act of self-delusion as they applauded a twenty-five-hour relief telethon hosted by Don Francisco, the Jay Leno of Chilean TV (minus the sense of humor). The enormously wealthy TV personality imported the telethon model into Chile during the Pinochet era when he staged his first marathons to abate childhood disease and poverty—two maladies aggravated by the regime he supported. Don Francisco's quake telethon brought in some $59 million, double its original goal. But that's only about one-tenth of a percent of the estimated cost of the quake damage and the tab for reconstructing Chile. Nonetheless, a consensus of national commentary proclaimed the telethon a striking success and proof that Chile could stand firmly on its own.

MARC COOPER

Marc Cooper (twitter.com/marc_cooper), a Nation *contributing editor, is director of USC Annenberg Digital News. His bestselling memoir of serving as translator to Chilean President Salvador Allende is titled* Pinochet and Me.

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Without accountability and adequate support for the victims of sexual violence during the Bosnian war, ethnic fault lines could deepen, writes Rajeshree Sisodia in **Justice Delayed in Bosnia**.

In honor of Women's History Month, *The Nation* presents a slide show featuring images and archive selections that highlight milestones in the ongoing fight for women's equality.

How will healthcare reform affect the economy? On **The Breakdown**, Washington editor Christopher Hayes talks to the *Washington Post*'s Ezra Klein to correct misperceptions.

Watch Johann Hari, author of **The Wrong Kind of Green**, discuss conservation groups and corporate cash on *Democracy Now!*.

Members of Congress who oppose the US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are divided on strategies to force de-escalation, writes Tom Hayden in **Exit Strategies for Iraq and Afghanistan**.

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Audacity

BY EDWARD SOREL AND RICHARD LINGEMAN

Y'KNOW, DICK, OBAMA'S NOT SO BAD. DON'T FORGET HE GOT GEITHNER INTO THE TREASURY
AND HE MADE IT CLEAR FROM THE START HE WAS GONNA COMPROMISE ON HEALTH CARE
AND HE ESCALATED OUR WAR IN AFGHANISTAN, EVEN THOUGH WE KNOW IT'S UNWINNABLE
AND HE NEVER TRIED TO THROW KARL ROVE OR GONZALES OR US INTO THE SLAMMER.
YEAH, YEAH. BUT I CAN NEVER FORGIVE THAT BASTARD FOR PUTTING AN AMERICAN FLAG PIN ON HIS LAPEL.
WHERE DOES THAT UPPITY ARAB GET OFF PRETENDING HE'S A REAL AMERICAN?!

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Eric Alterman

Money for Nothing

On February 23 the *New York Times* reported that ABC News had decided to reduce its staff by a whopping 300 to 400 people, or approximately a quarter of its workforce. Three days later, the paper ran a full-page ad featuring a Photoshopped crowd of the network's biggest and best-compensated celebrities. It included the stars of *Lost*, *Desperate Housewives* and *Grey's Anatomy* alongside newly promoted newscasters *Evening News* anchor Diane Sawyer and *Good Morning America* host George Stephanopoulos.

Viewed side by side, the advertisement and the news story led to an obvious conclusion: ABC is looting its news division to invest in its stars. CBS did much the same when it enticed Katie Couric away from NBC with a promise of a reported $15 million annual payday plus promotional advertising worth at least another $10 million. Sawyer's and Stephanopoulos's new compensation packages are not public, but in 2006 Sawyer was already reportedly making $12 million a year in the job Stephanopoulos now has. When Peter Jennings died five years ago, he left an estate valued at $54 million. (Morning show hosts are paid like anchors because, while less prominent in the media, their shows rake in the big bucks from advertisers.) And yet despite the implications of ABC's advertising campaign, it is the network's news rather than its entertainment division that must carry the weight of these salaries. Can it be mere coincidence that the network cannot afford actual journalists anymore?

The news business is everywhere in crisis. CBS's news division is losing around 6 percent of its staff, and NBC has also made significant cuts, despite its being buoyed by the ability to amortize its costs across MSNBC, CNBC and MSNBC.com. Ironically, given the timing, ABC News president David Westin recently received the Radio-Television Digital News Foundation's First Amendment Leadership Award. Referring to the "wave after wave" of network cuts, he warned fellow broadcasters, "I can see no greater challenge to the First Amendment than the threats that are being faced by so many of our news organizations… threats to their ability to have the wherewithal to employ reporters and support them with the resources that they need."

Well, I have an idea. Imagine a world in which evening anchors, morning hosts (*and even network news division presidents*) were paid like journalists instead of hedge-fund managers. How many "resources" would that free up to invest in genuine news-gathering operations? Veteran print editors and reporters at places like the *Times* and *The New Yorker* manage to feed and clothe their families without costing their companies a million bucks a month, and they produce a great deal more valuable reporting and analysis than the network news stars do. So, too, do the folks at PBS and NPR. Would any sane person argue that the work of Bill Moyers or Terry Gross is somehow inferior to that of their network counterparts? (Here at *The Nation*, well, let's just say salaries are more in line with real cops than the actors who play them on *Law & Order*.)

Westin is worrying about the threats to the First Amendment of laying off a quarter of his staff, but whose idea was it for the networks to gut the news division of journalists to pay movie-star salaries to celebrity hosts in the first place? (Though, to be fair to movie stars, George Clooney reportedly did his brilliant performance in *Up in the Air* for just $2 million, less than a seventh of his usual fee.)

I teach a class at Brooklyn College on the portrayal of journalists in film since the days of *The Front Page*, and I found one could track the evolution of this attitude toward star compensation through two relatively recent films. In *The Paper* (1994), directed by Ron Howard, a crusty old veteran editor played by Robert Duvall tells the ambitious, obnoxious Glenn Close, who wants a raise to pay her decorator, the following fable about what it used to mean to be in the news business. (I found it transcribed on David Warsh's Economic Principals blog.) Duvall explains:

> In '68, a bunch of us that were covering the Olympics in Grenoble decided to go to the best restaurant in town. Now, the menu didn't have any prices, but we were on expense accounts and we figured, screw it, got drunk. There ended up, I don't know, being fifteen or twenty of us at the table. And when the check came, woo, it was $9,000! So there we are, all starting to point fingers, we're trying to remember who invited who, we're talking about going down to Western Union to get money cabled. And just when it was starting to get really embarrassing, this funny little guy at the next table called the maitre d' over, drew a couple of squiggly lines on a napkin, signed his name to it, winked at us, and that was that. The old guy was Pablo Picasso. And that napkin paid our bill. The people we cover, we move in their world, but it is their world. You can't keep up. If you try to make this job about the money, you'll just make yourself miserable. Because we don't get the money. Never have, never will.

That was then. Now cut to James Brooks's *Broadcast News* (1987), where much of the staff of the network's Washington bureau are being forced to clean out their desks and rewrite their résumés in what we now know was just the first wave of apparently endless personnel cuts. The overpaid anchor, wonderfully underplayed by Jack Nicholson, is evincing crocodile tears over the human cost of heartless corporate bean-counting: "You can make it less brutal by knocking a million off your salary," avers a brave colleague. Nicholson gives him a look of death.

Today, the producer would have to say at least "10 million" to make the story credible, but I'm afraid the look on Jack's face would be much the same. ■

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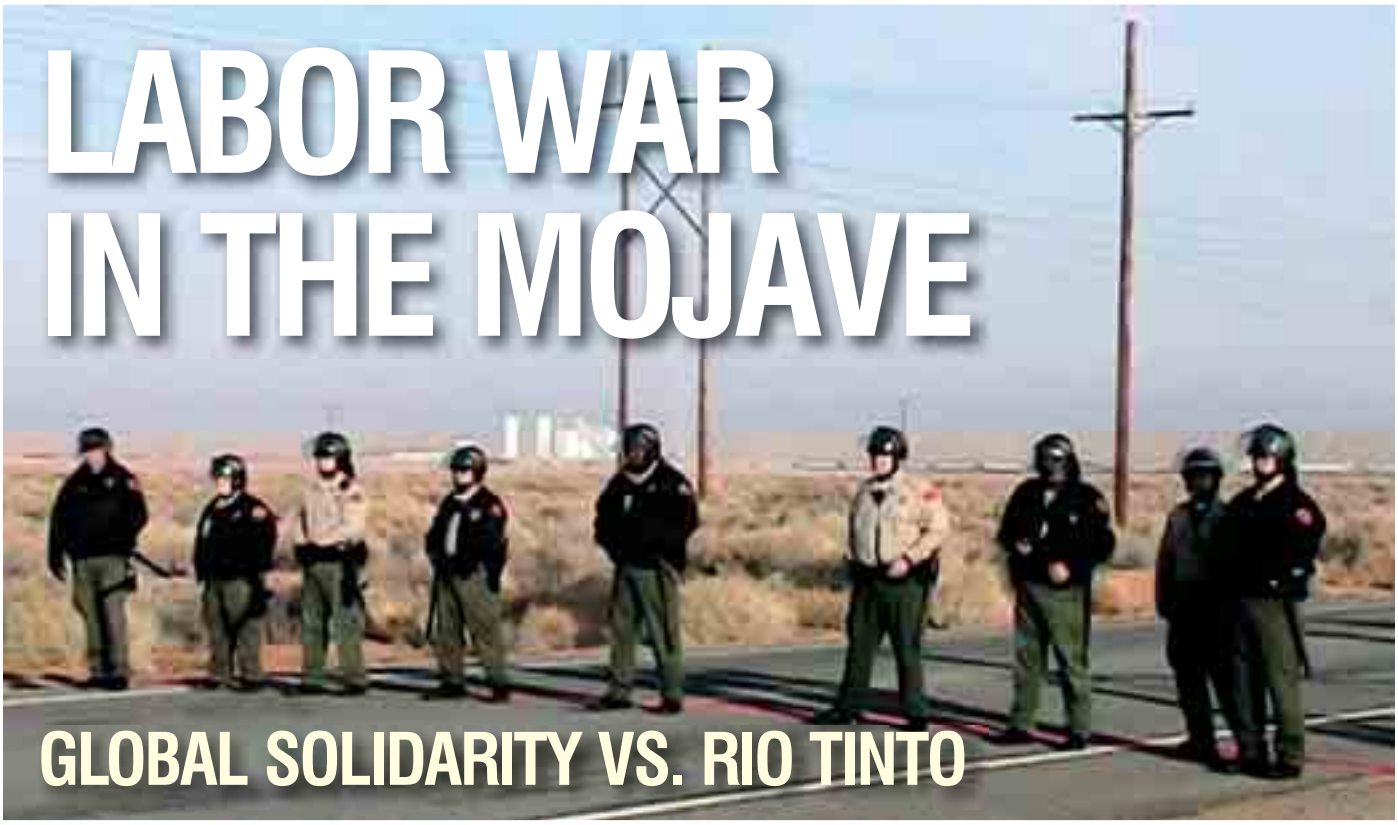
LABOR WAR IN THE MOJAVE

GLOBAL SOLIDARITY VS. RIO TINTO



AP PHOTO/RYAN COUCH

Kern County sheriff's deputies enforcing the lockout against ILWU mineworkers in Boron, California, January 31

by MIKE DAVIS

The biggest hole in California, with the exception of the current state budget, is Rio Tinto's huge open-pit mine at the town of Boron, near Edwards Air Force Base, eighty miles northeast of Los Angeles.

Seen from Google Earth, it is easy to imagine that the 700-foot-deep crater was blasted out of the Mojave Desert by an errant asteroid or comet. From the vantage point of Highway 58, however, the landscape is enigmatic: a mile-long rampart of ochre earth and gray mudstone, terminating at what looks like a giant chemical refinery.

At night, when a driver's mind is most prone to legends of the desert, the complex's intense illumination is startling, even slightly extraterrestrial, like the sinister off-world mining colony in *Aliens*.

Terri Judd's labor owns part of this eerie landscape—or rather its void. She's a third-generation borax miner, as deeply rooted in the high desert as one of the native Joshua trees. Every working morning for the past thirteen years, she has bundled her long red hair under a hard hat, climbed up the ladder of a giant Le Tourneau wheel loader and turned on its 1,600-horsepower Detroit Diesel engine. Her air-conditioned cab perches almost treetop height above custom-made, twelve-foot-high tires that cost $30,000 each. She operates this leviathan with delicate manipulations of two joysticks, more high-skill video game than *Mad Max*.

In a regular twelve-and-a-half-hour shift, she ceaselessly repeats the same mechanical calisthenic: lowering her twenty-foot-wide bucket, deftly scooping up twenty-five to thirty tons of borax ore, then delivering the load to one of the mine's plants to be made into boric acid or granulated for eventual use in dozens of industrial applications, from fiberglass surfboards to HD display screens.

Each year 1 million tons of borax products are fed into hopper cars (800 of which are permanently assigned to the mine) and hauled to the LA harbor for shipment to China and other industrializing countries hungry for the caustic residue of the Mojave's ancient lakes. The Boron pit, which replaced an underground mine, produces almost half the world's supply of refined borates.

Strip-mining the Mojave may not be everyone's cup of tea, but Terri—a combat veteran of Operation Desert Storm and a single mom—flat-out loves her job. "What can I say? We get to play with the big toys. I guess I was always a tomboy. I preferred Tonkas to Barbies, socket wrenches to dollhouses."

But she doesn't play alone: Big Brother is looking over her shoulder, evaluating her performance. "In effect, the boss rides with me. The GPS in my loader can be monitored not only from the plant but from Rio Tinto's US headquarters in Denver, or, for that matter, from the global head office in London."

Peeping Toms, however, don't normally perturb Terri. "There are no slackers in the pit. Our productivity is sky-high because borax mining is our family history." Indeed, a Boron workforce shrunk to less than 40 percent of its 1980 size produces record outputs despite a rapidly aging plant; an ornery, dipping ore body; and an increasingly remote and hostile management.

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I

Terri acknowledges that her devotion to the mine has been an act of unrequited love. In last year's contract negotiations, Rio Tinto (the British-Australian multinational acquired its Boron facility, U.S. Borax, in 1968 and renamed it Rio Tinto Borax) stunned members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, ILWU, Local 30 (Boron), by demanding abolition of the contractually enshrined seniority system and the surrender of any worker voice in the labor process.

According to Dean Gehring, the latest in a succession of recent mine managers, international competition compels a drastic switch to "high-performance teams that have the flexibility to do many different jobs, and we need to reward and promote our top performers. The old contract doesn't allow us to do that."

The company wants a contract that would allow it to capriciously promote or demote; to outsource union jobs; to convert full-time to part-time positions with little or no benefits; to reorganize shift schedules without warning; to eliminate existing work rules; to cut holidays, sick leave and pension payments; to impose involuntary overtime; and to heavily penalize the union if workers file grievances against the company with the National Labor Relations Board.

Rio Tinto, in essence, claims the right to rule by divine whim, to blatantly discriminate against and even fire employees for felonies like "failing to have or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with Company personnel, client personnel, contractor, and visitors."

"The company's proposal," union negotiators emphasize, "would destroy our union, lower our living standards, and give Borax total control over our jobs." On January 30, Local 30 members unanimously rejected the concessions demanded by Rio Tinto.

The company deadline expired the next morning, when Terri Judd set off for work as usual with her lunchbox and thermos. At the locked front gate she and other day-shift workers encountered a phalanx of nervous Kern County sheriff's deputies in full riot gear. Inside the plant, an elite "strike security team" hired by Rio Tinto had taken control of operations.

Delaware-based J.R. Gettier & Associates brags that it is the Home Depot of unionbusting, a one-stop source for security planners, armed guards, legal experts, industrial spies and, most important, highly skilled replacement workers. It even has staff who can operate Terri's giant loader.

The Gettier mercenaries wore sneers and dark glasses as they pushed their convoy past a crowd of angry Local 30 members. "Being locked out," says Terri, "is different from going on strike. Initially there's disbelief that the company is actually serious about booting you out the door. Hey, my granddad worked in this mine. But then you see that caravan of scabs coming to take your jobs, and the betrayal cuts like a knife in your heart."

Mike Davis, a Nation *contributing editor, is a San Diego–based author and activist.*

II

Once upon a time, there were several thousand mining communities in North America; perhaps fewer than a hundred still exist. Boron (unincorporated, population 2,000) is one of the survivors—and all the more anomalous since it is not in the red desert of Wyoming or the hills of West Virginia but in the outer orbit of Los Angeles sprawl. In the boom days of the 1930s it was a textbook company town, where employees of what was then called Pacific Borax—many of them, like Terri Judd's grandfather, Dust Bowl Oklahomans—lived in company houses and used company scrip to shop at the company store.

Unionization (originally by an old AFL affiliate called the Borax Workers Union) ended the feudal era, but the one-employer character of the town remained intact until a bitter, often violent 132-day strike in 1974 forced blacklisted miners to seek new jobs. Some found work at a nearby rocket-test range, while others learned to polish mirrors at an Israeli-built solar power station or applied for guard jobs at the federal prison up the road.

But economic diversity remains limited, and fully one-quarter of Boron's households still punched a Rio Tinto time clock this past New Year's. There are probably an equal number of mine retirees and former employees, so virtually everyone in town has some intimate link to the mine and its turbulent history.

During the 1974 conflict Boron polarized into majority pro-union and minority pro-company factions. There was a famous riot at the front gate in the first hours of the conflict, followed by the dynamiting of several foremen's homes, the blowing up of the mine's power line, episodic exchanges of gunfire, an exodus of managerial employees and de facto martial law during the nearly yearlong occupation of the community by Kern County sheriffs.

The current lockout, in contrast, rallies a far more inclusive local patriotism. Along Twenty Mule Team Road, SUPPORT BORAX MINERS placards festoon the windows of homes and pickups. Skateboarders and grandmothers wear black UNION TOUGH T-shirts. Sympathy with the ILWU is not a condition for loathing Rio Tinto's hireling army of scabs and guards.

III

Day twelve. The lockout is beginning to feel like a reverse siege. It is the town, not the mine, that is under growing pressure. At the Local 30 hall, the "gate watch" crew reports that the sheriff's deputies have become quite relaxed, even friendly, probably because they're engaged in their own contract battle with county supervisors. But the replacements have become more brazen, at one point deliberately bumping into a union member with their van.

One of the organizers gravely notes the incident on his legal pad, then returns to the kitchen, where he huddles with his cellphone. He's calling the Local roster to remind members about next week's big solidarity march. Boron workers are awaiting the arrival of ILWU members from up and down the West Coast, as well as a contingent of mining and dock union-leaders from around the world.

Across the hall, meanwhile, Terri is arguing with another

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REUTERS/HO NEW

This 240-ton-capacity haul truck is dwarfed by the 700-foot-deep borax mine pit operated by Rio Tinto.

loader operator, Kevin Martz, over which of them performs the most herculean labor in the pit.

Quantitatively, there should be no contest: Kevin operates a P&H 4100 "ultra class" shovel with a 115-ton payload capacity, one of the biggest machines in the mining world. In a few workdays he could probably dig the Panama Canal by himself. But Terri believes that quality is more important. "Come on, Kevin, you only shovel dirt; I dig ore. I'm high value."

Kevin pretends a smirk, then chuckles. He explains that a mining shift, like an army platoon in combat, relies upon constant ribbing to sustain camaraderie. "Our work depends upon friendship, not competition. In an environment of dangerous machines and high explosives, we have to watch each other's backs."

Neither he nor Terri discerns any rational logic in Rio Tinto's zeal to atomize the traditional work community and promote a dog-eat-dog struggle for bonuses.

"Some genius in Denver or London," Terri says, "believes that you can improve output by adopting the law of the jungle. But without a fair system to determine promotion and pay, teamwork will be undermined and morale will collapse. The mine will become less productive and more dangerous."

Conversation moves to the impact of the lockout on the town's economy. Terri is a major mover-shaker in the Veterans of Foreign Wars, while Kevin is a scout leader and active member of his Latter-day Saints ward.

"Normally the VFW is packed to the rafters on Friday nights for karaoke," Terri explains, "but last Friday there were just three families. Business at Domingo's [a Mexican restaurant made famous by its popularity among Space Shuttle crews from nearby Edwards] is way down, and the town dentist could close because everyone has lost their family dental benefits."

Kevin adds that many Local 30 families, especially those who recently bought homes in now-sunk boom-burbs like Victorville and Palmdale, forty or so miles from Boron, face imminent disaster. "Their mortgages are already below periscope depth, so the lockout is just the final shove out the front door. They'll lose their homes."

Kevin believes that fundamental values are under threat. Like many working-class Mormons—the most misunderstood social group in the American West—he's a good trade unionist but no liberal. Not inaccurately, he sees Local 30 making a conservative last stand on behalf of the decent jobs that allow frugal families to prosper in stable, human-scale communities like Boron.

"My wife's a schoolteacher at Edwards Air Force Base, we've no debts other than our mortgage, our kids flourish in local schools, we love the desert—yet if Rio Tinto continues to play this hand, we'll eventually be forced to leave, perhaps to Wyoming."

Terri, the quintessential Boronite, confesses that she also has been wondering whether pits in Nevada or Wyoming are looking for experienced loader operators. She's optimistic about the union but knows that Rio Tinto wields power almost beyond ordinary people's reckoning. "Will we be a ghost town next year? That's the real issue."

IV

"Where the hell is Bougainville?" someone asks Dave Dorton.

"An island near New Guinea," he replies.

The Local 30 gate-watchers are gathered under a sun canopy, drinking black coffee and talking about the skeletons in the company's closet. Dave, a dashing character who looks like he just jumped off a Viking longship, is "silo chief" at the plant and one of Local 30's many old-school bikers. He says that the lockout has incited new rank-and-file interest in Rio Tinto's notorious history. "It's like waking up and discovering that you're married to a serial murderer."

Last summer the US district court in Los Angeles upheld the standing of Bougainville residents—represented by Steve Berman, the superstar class-action litigator—to sue Rio Tinto in an American court for "crimes against humanity, war crimes, and racial discrimination." Like the case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce in Dickens's *Bleak House*, the suit is moving glacially through the courts against terrific opposition from the corporation and may take years to reach a judgment, but the charges are horrifying.

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In the late 1960s Rio Tinto, supported by Australia (and after 1975 by the independent government of Papua New Guinea—PNG), began expropriating land in the fertile center of the northernmost Solomon Island of Bougainville to mine one of the world's richest copper deposits. Millions of tons of pit tailings poisoned ecosystems and devastated local agriculture, and by 1989 the relentless repression of nonviolent protest ignited a full-scale revolutionary uprising. The company appealed to its business partner, the neocolonial Papuan government.

In Bougainville, according to its former commander, General Singirok, "the PNG Defence Force was Rio Tinto's personal security force and was ordered take action by any means necessary." The lawsuit provides stunning evidence of company/government atrocities in a conflict that led to the death of almost 10 percent of the island's population. (During the Spanish Civil War, Rio Tinto applauded Gen. Francisco Franco for executing the radical miners who had occupied its namesake Spanish property.)

Bougainville is only one item in a long résumé of devastation. The Norwegian government pension fund, the world's second-largest, recently divested $870 million in Rio Tinto stock to protest its "unethical" partnership with Freeport McMoRan in the infamous Grasberg mine in Indonesian-occupied Irian Jaya (western New Guinea). Grasberg is an environmental disaster almost beyond imagination, and as in Bougainville, tribal resistance has been met with assassinations and massacres by the Indonesian Army.

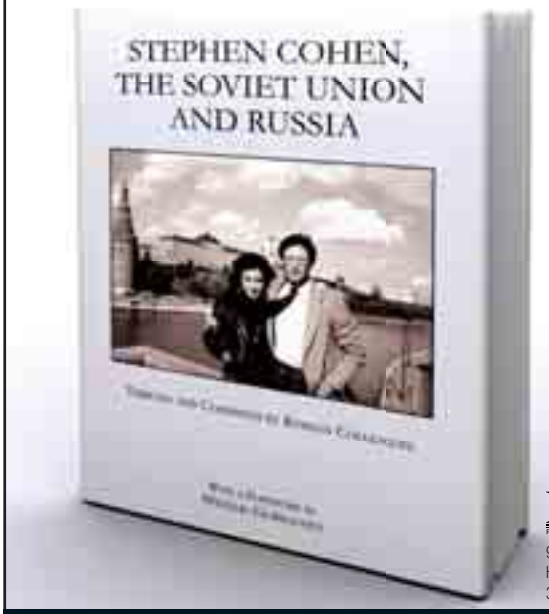
If Rio Tinto's operations in the southwest Pacific recall King Leopold's Congo, its industrial relations, from southern Africa to Labrador and Utah, are a state-of-the-art experiment in worker intimidation.

In southern Africa, miners' unions have long questioned whether Rio Tinto, long rumored to have supplied uranium to Pretoria's clandestine atomic weapons program in the 1970s, has ever really broken with apartheid in its treatment of black workers. In February there was a worker uprising at its huge Rössing uranium pit in Namibia over management's unilateral raising of performance quotas and its refusal to address worker grievances. (Interestingly, the government of Iran is Rio Tinto's junior partner, with 15 percent of shares, at Rössing.)

In Australia, where the company exploits some of the world's most important iron, coal and uranium reserves, it has uprooted traditional unions, cut real wages and (as it is now trying to do in Boron) replaced collective bargaining with variable individual contracts.

Aussie miners and train drivers, however, have fought back with wildcat strikes and new organizing campaigns. Their defiance has led the company to an extraordinary solution: a fully automated "mine of the future" that won't require unruly miners or railroad workers. A working prototype is being developed in the remote Pilbara iron range: eleven mines with robotized drilling, automated haul trucks and, soon, driverless ore trains, all controlled from an operations center in Perth, 800 miles away.

STEPHEN COHEN, THE SOVIET UNION AND RUSSIA
TRIBUTES AND COMMENTS BY RUSSIAN COLLEAGUES
WITH A FOREWORD BY MIKHAIL GORBACHEV



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Industry analysts debate whether this automated mining revolution will be feasible outside the largest, near-surface iron and coal deposits, so Local 30 probably doesn't need to worry about any imminent augmentation of scabs with robots. But they're urgently trying to decipher the complex and ruthless game that Rio Tinto and other mining superpowers are playing on a world stage.

V

The industrial revolution in Asia is bringing to a climax the struggle for ownership of the earth's strategic metals and minerals that began in the late nineteenth century. For instance, a single merger, between Rio Tinto and the even larger BHP Billiton, would create the world's third-largest corporation (after ExxonMobil and GE), with unprecedented power to set prices for exports of iron, aluminum, copper and titanium.

To put it another way, such a mega-merger could exact enormous rents from the future industrial growth of China and the rest of Asia—something that Beijing, at least, has no intention of allowing to happen (iron ore is China's second most costly import, after oil).

What *Forbes* called "the Battle for Rio Tinto" began two years ago, at the end of the 2000s mining boom, when cash-flush BHP attempted a hostile takeover that was countered by multibillion-dollar blocking offers of new investment from the government-controlled Aluminum Corporation of China.

But as resource prices slumped after the Wall Street crash, Rio Tinto share values were immediately pulled under by the weight of the $38 billion debt the company had incurred to buy Alcan (before BHP did) in 2007. BHP, faced with Rio Tinto's inability to sell its Alcan debt as bonds, as well as the subsequent downgrading of its credit, temporarily called off the attack, while the still ardent Chinese were rudely rebuffed by Rio Tinto's rebellious shareholders, supported by xenophobic Australian politicians.

Rio Tinto managed to survive the first year of recession by cutting thousands of jobs and selling off $10 billion of nonessential assets while retrenching in its core mission of exploiting "large, low-cost ore bodies." Mine managers in its minerals division, which includes borates, were told that future investment in their operations would only reward dramatic cost-cutting and higher earnings, not status quo profits. Labor, it seems, is an especially "compressible" cost.

In the specific case of Boron, the financing of a project called "the Modified Direct Dissolving of Kernite," advertised as the key to the mine's long-term profitability, was made conditional upon achieving "flexibility and accountability in our work practices"—that is to say, scrapping the old collective bargaining agreement with Local 30.

In negotiations, Rio Tinto took the intransigent stand that the crisis in world mining had made such union contracts obsolete. Yet since last fall, Rio Tinto and other ore giants have surfed spectacular recoveries on the wave of China's renewed growth, with iron prices expected to rise by as much as 50 percent this year.

Cash flow from other mineral products, including borates, and surges in mine share prices have been bolstered by a huge influx of investment from pension funds and other institutional investors—probably a speculative bubble in the making.

Then, in a staggering move, Rio Tinto betrayed its Chinese suitors and eloped with BHP. Their love child is a joint-production venture—in essence, a partial merger—that consolidates their huge iron ore operations in Australia, giving them unprecedented price-setting power over the world's most important metal.

Indeed, both Tom Albanese, Rio Tinto's CEO, and Marius Kloppers, his counterpart at BHP, recently warned major customers that annual price benchmarks will become a thing of the past, as the mining combination adjusts pricing to the volatile spot market. China, in particular, could see its steel and manufacturing costs rise by billions.

Beijing's immediate, furious response was to arrest Rio Tinto's top four executives in Shanghai for "espionage" (the charges were later reduced to bribery). Chinese officials talk darkly about the Rio Tinto/BHP "monopoly," although undoubtedly they would prefer to own part of it rather than actually dismantle it.

VI

The future of a small town in the Mojave is thus entangled in geoeconomic competitions far larger and more important than the borate market itself. So what chance do 560 miners and their families have in a fight with Godzilla?

The record of the past twenty years is not encouraging. With some heroic exceptions—the 1989-90 Pittston coal strike in Virginia, the 1990s Frontier Casinos strike in Las Vegas and a few others—international unions have seldom been willing to support a local fight to the last bullet or bitter dime.

But ILWU has a unique street credibility. The pit bull of CIO-generation unions, it bit into the heels of the West Coast stevedoring industry in 1934 and never let go. Industrial unions are supposed to be dying, but the ILWU, despite its modest size, punches hard enough to keep the powerful Pacific Maritime Association sulking in its corner, while ensuring that the docks remain safe and well paid.

As the only union that survived McCarthyism with its left-wing leadership (under Harry Bridges) intact, the ILWU is also legendary for putting muscle behind the slogan of "working-class solidarity." Since the 1960s it has conducted scores of job actions and walkouts in support of striking Australian dockers, California farmworkers and South African freedom fighters. Indeed, in May 2008 the union shut down the West Coast for a day to protest the war in Iraq.

In anticipation of the Boron lockout, ILWU had persuaded members of an international coalition of mining and maritime unions—many of whom have done battle with Rio Tinto—to hold their periodic conference in the nearby desert city of Palmdale. On February 16 the delegates, along with rank and file from other ILWU locals, arrive in Boron for a march to the mine followed by a big Local 30 barbecue.

The overture to the protest is the earthshaking full-throttle

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roar of shovelhead and twin-cam Harley-Davidson engines. The stevedore-bikers of Local 13 (LA Harbor) emerge out of the desert haze like Marlon Brando's leather-clad horde in *The Wild One* (or, better, the Comanches in *Blood Meridian*).

Someone, awe-struck, whispers, "Glad these guys are on our side." Later I count twenty-six Harley black beauties corralled in a reverential semicircle on the street side of the union hall. (The unfortunate owners of rice-burners and pasta rockets have had to remove their imported Japanese and Italian bikes to a discreet distance.)

Carloads of out-of-town ILWU members arrive, then two buses carrying dozens of US and foreign labor leaders. The crowd applauds, people shake hands, someone turns up the volume on "Born in the USA" and the marchers begin to assemble, about 600-strong, behind a banner that spans the entire width of the road: AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL.

It's an easy one-mile walk in pleasant weather to the front gate. Local 30 brings a dozen American and Marine Corps flags to the front, and begins to chant, "We Wanna Work, We Wanna Work." The sheriffs are relaxed, but the Gettier security guards up the road nervously shift their feet. As usual, their faces are inscrutable behind dark glasses, but you can almost smell their guilty sweat.

VII

Imagine a picnic jointly organized by the IWW, the American Legion and the Hells Angels. One of the first speakers is Oupa Komane from the South African miners' union. He has a magnificent voice: "Comrades, I bring you revolutionary greetings from the miners of South Africa!" I look around to see how the "comrades" waving American flags react. Komane gets warm applause.

A battle-hardened copper miner from Utah (where Rio Tinto owns the great Kennecott pit at Bingham Canyon) says, "I can't tell you what I think of this company—not in front of women and children." An Australian warns, "They will kill your town. That's what they did to us." A Canadian talks about more dead mill towns in Quebec, while a New Zealander tells a story about Rio Tinto's sinister role in defeating climate-change legislation in his country.

The fiery head of the Turkish borate workers, whose state-owned industry (Eti Mine Works) was founded by Atatürk, father of the Turkish Republic, brings greetings from the Borons of Anatolia: Kirka, Emet, Kestelek and Bandirma. He scoffs at Rio Tinto's claim that his miners' lower hourly wages (almost $10 in a cheap country, versus an average of $26 in Boron) necessitates the trashing of union rights in California.

Finally, Ken Riley, president of the largely black International Longshoremen's Association Local 1422 in Charleston, South Carolina, and a leader of one of the most courageous fights in modern US labor history [see JoAnn Wypijewski, "Audacity on Trial," August 6/13, 2001], summarizes the case for optimism: "You pick on the ILWU, you pick on the world. When our own international deserted us, they were there. Now we're here."

Later, I take Ken aside and confess my doubts. He shakes

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his head. "I understand what you're saying, but you're wrong," he says. "This isn't political theater. The first month of a struggle is decisive, and the ILWU is doing a terrific job marketing Boron's importance to the rest of the labor movement. Internationally, our unions understand that we have to organize the logistics chain, from producers to transport to distributor to retailer. This is a new model of power for the labor movement, like industrial unionism in the 1930s, but adapted to the reality of globalization."

"But Boron?" I ask.

"Hey, something new is being born here. It has to be."

Toni McCormick, a pretty, jovial woman in her late 20s, gives me a ride back to my car. The wife of a Local 30 member, she coaches the cheer squad at Boron High. "I'm fourth generation," she tells me. "My great-grandfather's house is still standing, made out of old dynamite boxes held together with chicken wire. Our football team plays in a high desert league with other mining and military towns. Sometimes they have to tackle each other in the dirt because grass won't grow in a saline lake bed."

"Can anything grow in a dry lake?" I wonder.

"Sure," Toni smiles. "Miners can." ■

Haiti's Excluded

How the earthquake aid regime sidelines those it is supposed to help.

by REED LINDSAY

Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Ruth Derilus had seen her share of tragedy. A 33-year-old iron-willed social worker trained by Haiti's Papay Peasant Movement, she twice helped organize relief efforts when massive floods devastated the city of Gonaïves and the surrounding countryside. In September 2004 she worked with women's and youth groups after Tropical Storm Jeanne killed more than 3,000 people. Four years later, she lost her home when a second deluge, unleashed by Tropical Storm Hanna and augmented by Hurricane Ike, once again brought the city to its knees. Ruth kept on going, working to organize rice farmers whose crops had been destroyed.

But nothing would prepare her for the tribulations she would face after the earthquake that struck Port-au-Prince on January 12 of this year. Ruth was in Gonaïves, and she got a phone call within minutes. Her 20-month-old son, Chevano, who was living with her husband in the capital, had suffered a blow to his head when their family's house collapsed. The line went dead. The next morning, Ruth took a bus to Port-au-Prince and went straight to the hospital. She could not find her son. She returned home and found her mother in tears. The nearby hospital had stopped operating after the earthquake, and by the time Chevano was taken to a United Nations military hospital on the morning of January 13, it was too late. Ruth recovered her son's body ten days later. Her husband was never found.

Ruth spent two inconsolable, sleepless weeks with her family in her hometown of St. Michel de L'Atalaye. Then, on January 26, she went back to work. In part it was the desire to help her country; in part it was the need to escape her grief. She moved into a camp with thousands of other homeless people in Port-au-Prince, and signed up as an organizer for an alliance of small, progressive NGOs called the Haiti Response Coalition (haitiresponsecoalition.org). She visits two to three camps a day, helping them to get ready to receive and distribute aid.

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The camps began forming hours after the earthquake, as people sought shelter far from buildings and walls. They occupied streets, empty lots, playgrounds, schools, soccer fields, plazas, parks, a car dealership, the prime minister's lawn and Haiti's only golf course. In the absence of any authority (UN peacekeepers and Haitian police were nowhere to be seen in the days after the earthquake), the survivors began organizing almost immediately, forming security brigades to protect camp residents from would-be criminals. In some camps, newly homeless doctors and nurses set up impromptu clinics for their neighbors. Camp committees dedicated their efforts to look for and receive aid from international organizations.

Reed Lindsay is the Washington bureau chief for Telesur, a twenty-four-hour television news network based in Latin America. He reported from Haiti as a freelance journalist from October 2004 until June 2009.

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John Hancock signing the Declaration of Independence

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Professor Thomas L. Pangle holds the Joe R. Long Chair in Democratic Studies in the Department of Government at The University of Texas at Austin. He received his B.A. from Cornell University and his Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Chicago. Before joining the faculty at The University of Texas, Professor Pangle taught at Yale University, Dartmouth University, the University of Chicago, and the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris. He is the recipient of many awards and accolades including four fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Robert Foster Cherry Great Teacher of the World Prize from Baylor University.

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All this made Ruth's job easier, but she concedes that the results of her work have been disappointing. In the first days after the earthquake, the coalition's member organizations had difficulty sending aid, blocked from landing planes in Port-au-Prince by the US government, which controlled the airport and initially gave priority to troop deployments and the delivery of military equipment. But even since the transportation lines were loosened, the aid has come slowly, and Ruth has helped organize more camps than she has aid to deliver. Meanwhile, the well-heeled major relief aid agencies have often ignored camp committees and made handouts conditional on the presence of US or UN troops. (One World Food Program distribution I planned on attending was canceled at the last minute because not enough peacekeepers could be mobilized to provide security.) Even with soldiers standing guard, the distributions often ended in melees, attracting journalists and driving away families not willing to fight for food despite their hunger.

"The fights at aid distributions are a result of the way they give aid; they have nothing to do with Haitians," says Ruth.

'Of all the money they send here, only 10 percent actually makes it to the ground.'
—Ruth Derilus, Haitian social worker

"We are victims. We're hungry. But they need to show some respect for our dignity when they give us aid. When we have organized aid distributions, we have never had a problem. We don't need soldiers with guns. The organizations that have aid distribute it poorly, and those who can distribute the aid well don't have any."

That the large aid organizations are not reaching out to community-based organizations, much less consulting them, is nothing new in Haiti. After the 2008 floods in Gonaïves, Ruth worked with a Beltway-based nonprofit organization with a multimillion-dollar budget. She says she will never do it again.

"Of all the money they send here, only 10 percent actually makes it to the ground. The rest is spent on foreign experts, hotels, car rentals, hotel conferences."

Ruth's critiques of the current aid effort, run by foreigners who have never been to Haiti and earn five-figure monthly salaries enhanced by danger premiums, are no less withering.

"There might be a camp with 3,000 families, and they're trying to distribute 200 items. Of course there are going to be fights," says Ruth. "Some camps have four or five organizations helping them, and none of them seem to be working together. Other camps have received nothing."

On the capital's streets, frustration and resentment are increasingly tangible.

"I'm going to take to the streets to tell all the Americans they aren't doing anything useful while we are living in misery," says Marie Carinne Joseph, who has just spent a sleepless night in the rain at the Toussaint Louverture Plaza in front of the National Palace, which US troops occupied shortly after the earthquake. "I'm not into politics, but I will scream high and low. My cardboard is wet, and the sheets are wet. I'm going to raise them above my head and show the entire world so they can see them."

Some people in high places have gotten the message. John Holmes, the UN official in charge of humanitarian aid, recently warned of "the potential consequences in terms of both politics and security of large demonstrations in some sensitive places."

Holmes attributed problems in aid distribution to a lack of coordination among international organizations, in an internal e-mail leaked on February 17.

"I fear we have simply not yet injected the necessary resources in some areas in terms of capacity to implement practical programmes and deliver on the ground," he wrote.

The admonishment came in sharp contrast to the self-congratulatory comments of US Ambassador Kenneth Merten during a trip to Washington three days earlier.

"In terms of humanitarian aid delivery… frankly, it's working really well," Merten told journalists. "And I believe that this will be something that people will be able to look back on in the future as a model for how we've been able to sort ourselves out as donors on the ground and responding to an earthquake."

US officials have already drafted long-term plans for Haiti behind closed doors. According to the *Miami Herald*, the Obama administration is pushing a plan that would create a Haitian Development Authority to manage foreign assistance for the next ten years. Canada has reportedly proposed that the World Bank run a trust fund, and French President Nicolas Sarkozy announced his country's aid scheme on February 17 after flying onto the grounds of the collapsed National Palace, the blasts of wind from his helicopter knocking off tarpaulin roofs in the adjacent tent city. The Haitian government is drafting its own plan to remake the country before a donor conference on March 31. And the Haitian elite have published a 173-page "Strategic Plan for National Salvation," whose editorial committee was led by Rudolph Boulos, a wealthy politician who was booted out of the Haitian Senate two years ago after documents surfaced proving he was a US citizen.

All the official plans ostensibly call for decentralization and investment in agriculture and tourism, aiming to encourage the nearly 600,000 displaced people who have fled the capital for the countryside to stay there. But so far there is no sign that either the Haitian government or its international backers are interested in bucking the neoliberal consensus, which for three decades has held that instead of producing their own food, peasants should migrate to the city to work in assembly plants.

On the contrary, the UN supports an economic recovery plan, endorsed by Bill Clinton and set in motion before the earthquake, centered in large part on bolstering the maquiladora industry. Calls for its implementation by international

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actors and members of the Haitian elite who run the plants have grown louder since the earthquake. Meanwhile, of the $575 million UN appeal for aid issued shortly after the earthquake, only 4 percent, or $23 million, was earmarked to help Haitian farmers obtain seeds and fertilizer (farmers have been feeding seeds intended for next season's crops to family members who have fled the capital). A month later, Food and Agriculture Organization chief Jacques Diouf complained that only 8 percent of this target had been met. On February 25 a UN report confirmed that the agriculture sector still had not received the funds. In the countryside, there is no evidence of any humanitarian aid, much less for agriculture.

In the desolate Anse Rouge salt flats nearly 125 miles north of Port-au-Prince, Louise Bonne Raymond sleeps with her daughter and other family members on the floor of the thatched patio of her cousin's house. Before the earthquake, nine people lived in the house. Now there are twenty-five.

"We live day to day here," says Louise Bonne, who is 30 and has spent her entire life in the capital. "We get up, and if we have food, we eat. If not, we have no choice. We have nothing and the people who live here don't either, because this is the countryside. There are no crops and no rice in reserve that they could give you either."

The house her father built in downtown Port-au-Prince collapsed, burying the clothes and cosmetics she sold to make a living. Louise Bonne and her daughter slept the first night in the street, and the next day found a cousin with a truck who took them and other family members to the salt flats.

She had been there only twice in the past twelve years. The only available job is harvesting salt—low-paying, unreliable and backbreaking work. The nearest secondary school is two hours away, and nonpotable water is available for sale twice a week. The family buys enough water to fill two sixty-gallon drums, and rations its use. Food is equally scarce—prices of imported staples like rice and beans shot up after the earthquake. Louise Bonne and her cousins braid one another's hair and sing dirges to pass the time. "Oh Lord, you don't see this feeling of danger. If you see me crying, it's the problems I've got," goes one song.

Despite the flood of displaced people here since the earthquake, community leaders in Anse Rouge told me that no humanitarian aid has reached there. But Louise Bonne does not plan on returning to Port-au-Prince. There is nothing left for her there, she says, and she would prefer to eke out an existence in the countryside than face another earthquake in the capital.

"Giving food aid from day to day is fine, but they should help us develop our natural resources for the long term," she says. "That way, we can respond to our needs without having to depend on someone else to give us rice, beans and the other daily necessities."

It is a demand repeated across Haiti, before and after the earthquake. Thirty years ago Haitians produced most of the food they consumed, surviving on a diverse diet that included homegrown staples such as manioc, breadfruit, yams, sweet potatoes, plantains, millet, corn and rice. Rice imports were extremely limited. It was grown in the fertile Artibonite Valley and was eaten as a special meal on Sundays or special occasions. Beginning in 1986, a military junta backed by Washington began flooding the market with cheap imported rice subsidized by the US government. The economic liberalization was overseen by Leslie Delatour, a "Chicago Boy" economist whose widow, Elisabeth Débrosse Delatour, later became an economic adviser to current President René Préval, and is now his wife.

A quarter-century later, millions of families live in precarious slums, farmers are incapable of feeding the population and the country is heavily dependent on imported food, above all US-grown rice (of which Haiti is now the fourth-largest importer). The devastating consequences of this dependence became impossible to ignore in April 2008, when hundreds of thousands of Haitians protested rising prices of imported food, paralyzing the country with roadblocks and forcing the ouster of the prime minister. Préval lowered the price of imported rice, and his foreign backers began paying lip service to supporting national production. But as usual, little was done to support Haitian farmers.

> 'It's foreign aid that is helping the people. But we could respond to their needs. We should be feeding them.' —Haitian rice farmer

The earthquake has only exacerbated Haiti's dependence on US imports and foreign aid. White rice from the United States has been the keystone of the humanitarian aid response. But it has provoked angst from Artibonite rice farmers, who complain of the absence of credit, antiquated tools, broken irrigation systems, prohibitively high prices for fertilizer and, above all, subsidized "Miami rice" that undercuts their sales.

"It hits us hard," says Rosalvo Louverture, standing in his rice paddy less than three hours north of Port-au-Prince. "It's foreign aid that is helping the people in Port-au-Prince. But we could respond to their needs. We should be feeding them."

International aid groups compare notes and discuss strategies for distributing aid at "cluster meetings," from which ordinary Haitians are in effect banned. "Poor Haitians are not only not present at these meetings; they are made to feel unwelcome," a development consultant from a prominent Haitian family told me. It is not only the poor who have been shut out of the decision-making process. A friend of mine, a Haitian government official who was sent to a food cluster meeting, was barred from entering because she did not have a passport. Discrimination against Haitians in their own country seems more prevalent than ever since the earthquake. US Coast Guard officials barred my Haitian cameraman from entering the airport, where military press attachés were giving interviews, even though he had a UN-issued press credential.

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When I asked if he should return with a passport, they said they would be even less inclined to let him enter out of concern that he would somehow hop aboard a US-bound plane.

Ruth Derilus has yet to visit a cluster meeting. But she hopes to soon. She recently joined a group of Haitian community leaders who are determined to force the international aid agencies to listen to their demands.

"We're going to fight against the way in which they are giving aid," she says. "These meetings of the big foreigners are the ones that will decide our future. We can't be afraid of what they think of us. We need to speak when we're not in agreement. We have to put pressure on them."

Ruth says she is hopeful that the earthquake will open the doors for real change.

"The positive aspect of the earthquake is that for the first time, all the people who had migrated to Port-au-Prince are returning to the countryside," she says. "Port-au-Prince was not built for this many people, and that's why there were so many victims from the earthquake. Port-au-Prince needs help, but now is the time to support Haitian farmers so we can produce our own food.

"Another Haiti is possible, if there is enough will, capacity and solidarity."

Those are three big ifs, and Ruth readily concedes that her expectations of reversing the current aid juggernaut are muted. In the meantime, she says, she will keep fighting, organizing displaced people by day, and keeping her sorrow at bay by night. ■

Coalition of the Shilling

Nonpartisan think tanks are supporting journalism—but who's supporting the think tanks?

by NATHAN HODGE

On February 25 journalist Thomas Ricks published an important scoop on his blog at ForeignPolicy.com: Army Gen. Raymond Odierno, the top US commander in Iraq, had requested keeping a brigade in northern Iraq beyond President Obama's deadline for the withdrawal of combat forces. The timing of the story was intriguing. Just two days earlier, Ricks had published an op-ed in the *New York Times* calling for US troops to remain in Iraq long term. "I think leaders in both countries may come to recognize that the best way to deter a return to civil war is to find a way to keep 30,000 to 50,000 United States service members in Iraq for many years to come," he wrote. The op-ed coincided with a policy brief by Ricks issued by the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), the Washington think tank where he is a senior fellow.

Ricks, a longtime military correspondent for the *Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal* and author of the bestseller *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, had been a prominent critic of US policy in Iraq. Recently on his blog, he called the decision to invade "one of the biggest blunders in American history." But his op-ed, along with the rollout of the policy brief and the news story, was selling the idea of a long stay in Iraq.

CNAS, like most think tanks, bills itself as "independent and nonpartisan"; its leadership says that it takes no positions as an institution. But it played a key role in selling the escalation of the war in Afghanistan, and now it could help prepare the ground for the president to reverse course on Iraq and keep a large force in the country.

It's part of a new influence game in Washington. Think tanks, once a place for intellectuals outside government to weigh in on important policy issues, are now enlisted by people within government to help sell its policies to the public, as well as to others in government. Institutions like CNAS are also heavily funded by major weapons manufacturers and Pentagon contractors, creating potential conflicts of interest rarely disclosed in the media.

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Indeed, the presence of journalists on the payrolls of think tanks is crucial to their clout, lending them the imprimatur of neutral, nonpartisan news organizations. Since its founding in 2007, CNAS has played host to a string of reporters from major US newspapers: Ricks worked on his most recent book, *The*

Nathan Hodge writes for Danger Room, Wired's national security blog. He is the author of The Armored Suburban, *a forthcoming book about the military and nation-building.*

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Gamble, at CNAS; *Post* reporter Greg Jaffe and former *New York Times* reporter David Cloud worked on *The Fourth Star*, a book profiling four Army leaders, while in residence; Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt, veteran military and intelligence reporters for the *Times*, are researching a book on counterterrorism there. And CNAS isn't the only place where national security reporters have set up shop. *Times* military correspondent Michael Gordon is a senior fellow at the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), a new think tank founded by Kimberly Kagan, the wife of Fred Kagan of the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and a cheerleader for the "surge" strategies in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Think tanks are also investing in new media: CNAS bankrolls influential blogs like Abu Muqawama (a counterinsurgency-themed blog written by Andrew Exum, a former Army Ranger); Abu Aardvark (a Middle East politics blog by Marc Lynch, an associate professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University); and The Best Defense (Ricks's daily take on military affairs). Lynch's and Ricks's blogs are published on the website of *Foreign Policy* magazine, owned by the *Washington Post*. (*Foreign Policy* discloses the links to CNAS but has no upfront disclaimer about who funds CNAS.)

As newspapers close foreign bureaus and shrink newsrooms—threatening independent national security reporting at a time when the United States is involved in two wars—think tanks like CNAS have moved to fill the void in new and old media. And while tightfisted newspaper publishers may be less than generous with book leave, think tanks like CNAS and ISW offer a place to work on long-form journalism free of daily deadline pressure.

What enables journalists to make the leap to an institution like CNAS is its carefully cultivated image of bipartisanship. Its board of directors includes prominent Democrats and Republicans, which makes it easier to get past the standards editors. "I could go there without being branded," Jaffe told me. "It would have been a tougher sell to my bosses to go to AEI or the Center for American Progress."

Schmitt made a similar argument. "We've tried to keep our reporting middle-of-the-road, for our careers, and I think we were looking for an institution that would reflect that," he told me.

At first glance, it's an ideal arrangement. Jaffe and Cloud's book, for instance, was a fairly measured portrait of top leaders like Gen. David Petraeus, and, more important, CNAS doesn't dictate the journalists' views. "CNAS had zero control or influence over the book's content," Jaffe wrote me in an e-mail. "We got a small travel stipend ($5,000 each) and office space, but that was it."

But Jaffe's argument begs the question of whether think tanks, even centrist ones, truly offer the same independence that newspapers purport to have. CNAS is an instructive case. Two former Clinton administration officials, Michèle Flournoy and Kurt Campbell, founded CNAS in 2007 as a way for centrist Democrats to reclaim a place in the national security debate ahead of the 2008 presidential race. It was an expert triangulation: Flournoy, Campbell and their associates staked out a hawkish (or, as they would term it, a "pragmatic and principled") position on Iraq, opposing early deadlines for withdrawal. After Obama's election, CNAS would emerge as a key feeder for the new administration's national security team. No fewer than fourteen CNAS grads would land slots in the Defense and State departments. Flournoy now occupies the number-three post at the Pentagon, and Campbell is the head of the State Department's Asia bureau.

How exactly did Flournoy and Campbell conjure up a think tank out of thin air? In addition to support from foundations like the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Ploughshares Foundation, CNAS received heavy backing from the military industry. Its list of donors includes major weapons manufacturers like Boeing, Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics, Raytheon and BAE Systems. It also receives contributions from private security firms like Aegis Defence Services, as well as from KBR, the logistics support contractor notorious for overbilling the Pentagon for its services in Iraq and Afghanistan. And it generates income from research contracts with the Pentagon and intelligence agencies, as do others like the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.

As newsrooms shrink, thinks tanks like CNAS have moved to fill the void. But can even centrist think tanks truly offer the same independence?

CNAS has also emerged as an important conduit for military commanders to reach key audiences and set the terms of the debate in Washington. When Gen. Stanley McChrystal decided to launch a sweeping, top-down review of Afghanistan strategy, he invited CNAS's Andrew Exum, who served in Afghanistan and Iraq, to join his assessment team. Exum was not the only think tanker who took part in McChrystal's surge of policy nerds. As part of his review, McChrystal reached out to a small but influential circle of national security wonks, including Fred Kagan (AEI), Kimberly Kagan (ISW), Stephen Biddle (Council on Foreign Relations), Anthony Cordesman (Center for Strategic and International Studies) and Jeremy Shapiro (Brookings Institution). It was a calculated exercise in bipartisanship, but it was also a smart PR move: upon returning from their Pentagon-organized visit to Afghanistan, many of the participants in the strategic assessment would serve as an advance guard for McChrystal's upcoming request for a significant increase in troops and resources.

On January 4 the top US intelligence officer in Afghanistan, Maj. Gen. Michael Flynn, issued a scathing report on the state of intelligence in Afghanistan. "Eight years into the war in Afghanistan, the US intelligence community is only marginally relevant to the overall strategy," the report said. "Having focused the overwhelming majority of its collection efforts and analytical brainpower on insurgent groups, the vast intelligence apparatus is unable to answer fundamental questions about the

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environment in which US and allied forces operate and the people they seek to persuade."

In other words, the military was clueless about Afghanistan's cultural terrain, economic development and local power dynamics. It was a damning assessment, but Flynn's critique caused a major stir in military circles for another reason. Instead of distributing it as an internal memorandum, Flynn published it through CNAS. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, through his press secretary, said he thought Flynn's findings were "spot on," but he also made it clear that he was uncomfortable with a serving general officer issuing his directives through a Beltway think tank.

But by publishing through a think tank, Flynn was able to reach an influential constituency: the foreign-policy pundits, armchair strategists and op-ed writers who could help sell the Afghanistan surge strategy to the public. The general would also reach top policy-makers outside his direct chain of command.

The perception of neutrality serves think tanks like CNAS well in other respects. In a December 21 opinion piece for CBS News, CNAS president and counterinsurgency advocate John Nagl and senior fellow Richard Fontaine wrote about the unprecedented role contractors play on the battlefield. While the authors pointed to some of the obvious problems of outsourcing defense, they reached a stunning conclusion. "When our nation goes to war, contractors go with it," they wrote. "We must get on with the task of adapting to this reality."

That opinion piece—which followed the release of a CNAS report on wartime contracting—put the think tank's stamp of approval on government outsourcing. CNAS says that corporate and individual donors don't fund individual projects, but CBS failed to mention that companies like KBR were contributing to CNAS's general fund. In an e-mail, CNAS CEO Nathaniel Fick confirmed that KBR had donated $200,000 (as of press time, KBR was not mentioned on its list of donors), and that the center is currently soliciting support from Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, DynCorp and Fluor, all companies that are in the business of "expeditionary support" contracting.

"The people we talk to, our corporate funders, are involved in that business," Nagl told me in a recent interview. "We talk to them about the fact that we're doing that project. We talk to them about their perspectives on it—but they don't directly fund that work."

CNAS may be nonpartisan, but for contractors, the message was clear. A December 18 blog post on the pro-contractor website Feraljundi.com praised the report, noting that contractor use has actually gone up on Obama's watch. "Yee haw. Finally there is a recognition of that fact over at CNAS, and this paper is proof of that."

This is how the Beltway consensus is built: not through some crude pay-for-play but through the subtle reinforcement of conventional wisdom. If the experience of Iraq taught us anything, though, it's that reporters need to maintain an adversarial relationship with the people who are helping to craft policy. ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

with what? The consensus school? The "American exceptionalists"? Cold war liberals who supported the Vietnam War? I'll take Zinn's clear ideology any day over those who claim not to have one.
JOSEPH A. PALERMO

SEMINOLE, FLA.
I took NPR's choice of David Horowitz differently. NPR did the left a favor. The only one who looked bad after Horowitz's commentary was Horowitz. If a person is unworthy of respect, turn on some music, let him step into the light and see how he dances. Give Ahmadinejad or Kim Jong-Il some time onstage to do the old soft shoe—and wait for the jeers and rotten tomatoes. Horowitz stepped on the stage in the limelight glare, slipped on a puddle of his own bile-infused saliva and fell flat on his big, fat, mean, nasty ass.
ROBERT AUSTIN

BERKELEY, CALIF.
Having David Horowitz comment on Howard Zinn is like having a Holocaust denier comment on Elie Wiesel.
STEVE JUNIPER

Alterman Replies

NEW YORK CITY
Thanks, everybody, though I remain confused about Mr. Palermo's definition of "snarky." I had differences with Zinn's interpretation of US history. I stated these clearly and respectfully. Palermo offers no evidence, or even argument, to dispute these views. So who's snarking whom?
ERIC ALTERMAN

John Logue Memorial Scholarship

SHAKER HEIGHTS, OHIO
Thank you, William Greider, for "John Logue, 1947–2009" [March 1], a touching account of the man's career. Logue was a pioneer in bringing employee ownership to the United States. The John Logue Memorial Employee Ownership Scholarship Fund has been created at Kent State. This endowed fund will set up an annual scholarship that will live on forever. It seeks to raise $100,000.

To contribute to the scholarship fund, please make a tax-deductible check to the KSU Foundation and put "Logue Memorial Employee Ownership Scholarship Fund" on the memo line. Send to: Department of Political Science, 302 Bowman Hall, PO Box 5190, Kent, OH 44242.
MARK CASSELL

Satchmo's Jazz

IRVINE, CALIF.
Thanks for the deliciously venomous headline for David Schiff's equally pungent review of Terry Teachout's *Pops* ["Not Even Bing's," March 1]. With the addition of William Deresiewicz's literary criticism and Barry Schwabsky's art criticism to your pages, *The Nation* seems to be enjoying a cultural renaissance. I've seldom read an arts review as bracing and insightful as Schiff's in any forum. Please give us more.
JUDITH WILSON

Correction: Even Worse than Reported

An editing error in Katha Pollitt's March 22 column led to incorrect figures for the percentage of women in Congress. In all of the 2000s their numbers rose from 13 percent to 17 percent.

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Books & the Arts.

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Mario Savio holding an IBM card used as a strike flier by the Free Speech Movement at the University of California, Berkeley, December 1964

A Body on the Gears

by SCOTT SAUL

In the fall of 1964, with the Free Speech Movement roiling the campus of the University of California, Berkeley, 21-year-old Mario Savio felt, with some pride of ownership, that "this little place had become…one of the central places on the planet." Four years later, Savio was falling off the map—living a few miles from campus in the West Berkeley flats, working on the assembly line of an electrical parts firm and caring with his wife for their infant son, who'd been born with severe developmental problems. The man the *New York Times* had dubbed "the archangel of student revolt" was finding shelter in quiet anonymity. Even the FBI, which named Savio one of fifteen "key activists" in early 1968 and investigated his bank accounts, phone accounts and workplace, concluded in a report that maybe he wasn't such a key activist anymore.

Yet the distinctiveness of Mario Savio—the particular tone and accent he lent to the New Left in its first years—is disclosed in a small set of details from this same FBI report. Savio, it seems, had taken to listing his phone number under false names (or what the Bureau called "aliases") in order to avoid harassing calls. In the phone book, Mario Savio was by turns José Martí, Wallace Stevens and David Bohm—which is to say, a late-nineteenth-century Cuban revolutionary-exile and poet who admired the US tradition of free speech yet scourged American imperialism; a Modernist poet who married philosophy and imagination

Freedom's Orator
Mario Savio and the Radical Legacy of the 1960s.
By Robert Cohen.
Oxford. 512 pp. $34.95.

("We seek/The poem of pure reality, untouched/By trope or deviation, straight to the word"); and a theoretical physicist who, after helping Robert Oppenheimer develop the atomic bomb, defied the House Committee on Un-American Activities and lost his professorship at Princeton as a result.

The assortment of names plots the wide arc of Savio's ambitions and identifies the tensions he struggled to master. Savio was a revolutionary and civil libertarian, logician and poet, scientific observer and self-aware partisan—and in his heyday a virtuosic extemporizer who seemed not so much to perform all these identities as to incarnate

Scott Saul, an associate professor of English and American studies at the University of California, Berkeley, is the author of Freedom Is, Freedom Ain't: Jazz and the Making of the Sixties. *He is writing a critical biography of Richard Pryor.*

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them. He was, in short, an icon of possibility for his generation of student activists; and so it's a great historical riddle, tinged with pathos, why he was, in Berkeley in 1964, the lightning rod of his time and, almost immediately afterward, a man who couldn't conduct the energy he'd summoned.

Robert Cohen dedicates much of *Freedom's Orator*, his absorbing and even-keeled biography of Savio, to this very question, peeling back the layers of myth that have enveloped Savio and the Free Speech Movement while substantiating their achievement. By necessity *Freedom's Orator* is a dual biography of a man and his movement, and almost half the book follows less than four months of Savio's life, the pivotal fall semester of 1964. The FSM ran what we might call a textbook student-activist campaign in that interval—if we overlook the fact that the textbook didn't exist yet. President Nixon's 1970 Commission on Campus Unrest termed militant student protest "the Berkeley invention," and rightly so, since the FSM pioneered the use of civil rights strategies of direct action in a university setting, demonstrating how such disruptive tactics could mobilize a majority of students and even win the sympathies of a formerly passive faculty.

The FSM had the benefit of a cadre of experienced organizers, many seasoned like Savio in civil rights work, and a university administration that couldn't shoot straight. What began as a seemingly minor dispute over civil liberties on campus—could students hand out political literature on a twenty-six-foot strip of land owned by the university?—spiraled quickly into a battle royal in which the meaning of the university and American liberalism seemed to be at stake. The central events have since passed into '60s legend: the seizure of a police car, wherein thousands of students surrounded a police cruiser holding an arrested civil rights activist, immobilizing it for thirty-two hours while speaker after speaker used the car's roof as their podium; the December 2 sit-in, wherein almost 800 students were arrested after occupying Sproul Hall, the central administrative building, to protest disciplinary action against four movement leaders; and the December 7 Greek Theatre incident, wherein Savio walked onstage to speak to the assembled student body and was immediately grabbed at his throat and arms by police and dragged offstage—an administration fiasco that UC president Clark Kerr called "an accident that looked like fascism."

In all these events, Savio played no small part in the theater of protest. It was he who first mounted the roof of the police car, taking off his shoes so as not to dent it—a quite sincere act of decorum, though not one that prevented him from comparing the police to Adolph Eichmann (they all "had a job to do"). It was Savio who, before the sit-in, famously urged students to put their "bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and…make [the machine] stop"—updating Luddism for the age of the Organization Man. And it was Savio who, at the Greek Theatre, publicly offered his own body to the cause, making his "machine" speech seem much more than mere metaphor.

Savio's gift for decisive action earned him the admiration of many students but the queasy attention of many faculty and administrators: it was one thing to read Sartre and Camus in philosophy class and quite another to apply existential ideas of moral engagement to the Berkeley campus, which they considered a far cry from France under German occupation. Intellectual historian Henry May, who chaired Berkeley's history department at the time, offered this revealing assessment:

> Always extreme but never sectarian, at times Messianic—and to adult ears—often skirting the edges of the ridiculous—Savio is the only leader who seems to represent a new genre.… In terms of religious and quasi-religious precedent, modern existentialism seems closer than Tolstoyan nonviolence. What Savio was demanding [in his "machine" speech] was something like an existentialist *acte gratuit*, a gesture of self-identification.

Despite his condescension, May was correct to emphasize how a kind of existential humanism—one that saw alienation as a tragic face of modern life, large bureaucracies as the machinery of quiet death and individual rebellion as a profound form of self-fulfillment—suffused Savio's rhetoric. His "machine" speech turned on the sense that men and women, by their nature, revolt against being turned into "a bunch of raw materials," to be "bought by some clients of the university, be they the government, be they the industry, be they organized labor, be they anyone!" "We're human beings!" he ended emphatically.

Just a few years later, Savio's recourse to ideas of universal human nature would seem imprecise if not presumptuous: how could one person—especially a young white American college student, bound seemingly for a life of middle-class prosperity—speak for every man and woman around the globe? Then again, why not? At the time, Savio's language tapped into a deep reservoir of aspiration and emotion, calling together all those "people who have not learned to compromise, who for example have come to the university to learn to question, to grow, to learn." In some quarters, such people would be known simply as "nerds"—and in fact, one sociological study of Berkeley undergraduates in 1964 concluded that a key variable separating FSM supporters from their opponents was GPA. (More than half of those with a GPA of B+ or better were self-designated radicals, while only one-tenth were conservatives.) Savio's rhetoric allowed these young people to recognize themselves as a community with higher motives than liberals like Clark Kerr, who was not only the UC president but also the nation's foremost labor-management negotiator, and therefore an expert in the art of compromise. Savio's nerds, by contrast, were proudly impractical: they were those who would "die rather than be standardized, replaceable, and irrelevant."

One of the great virtues of Cohen's deft biography is that it explains how a working-class Italian-American boy, growing up in Floral Park, Queens, at the onset of the cold war, came to embrace this existential vision of life *in extremis*. From an early age, Savio identified with the powerless and voiceless. What postwar sociologists proudly called "the embourgeoisement of the American working class"—its identification with the material prosperity of the middle class—felt to him like a stifling process of repression and violation.

Born December 8, 1942, Savio was given the name Mario but soon lost it. At his Catholic elementary school, one of the priests mocked his Italian-American roots by singing his name as a comic rhyme—"Maaaario Saaavio"—in front of the other children. When his father, Joseph, learned of this humiliation, he forced Mario to adopt the name Bob. Savio's father was dominating and difficult—a Sicilian who banned the Italian language from the home after he returned from service in World War II, a machinist who always felt his job was beneath him and a paterfamilias who brooked little disagreement within the family (to the point of having to win all card and board games he played with his children). *Freedom's Orator* also relates an early incident of sexual abuse, one that shadowed Savio's later bouts with depression. When he was 7 or 8, Savio was

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molested by a teenage uncle. Cohen gives us few details, but Savio captured its impact indelibly to a friend: "One day you are right-handed and the next day you are left-handed and the world has changed."

During these years Savio seemed to register physically the anxiety of self-development: he suffered from a painful stammer, a "semi-paralytic speech blockage" that afflicted him particularly when he hoped to challenge a figure of authority. "My entire vocal apparatus would simply freeze," he remembered, "and my head and neck and much of my body would buck in sympathetic spasm, while my eyes often rolled out of sight.... I occasionally had to abandon my effort to speak." Ironically, Savio's speech defect may have furnished the most intense preparation for his later role as the voice of the FSM. From an early age he studied the tone and cadence of the spoken word, driven by the sense that he needed to master all the components of speech or be defeated by them.

The young Savio found refuge, at least at first, in the Catholic Church and in his studies. An altar boy, he inherited what he called a "somewhat dreamy religiosity" from his mother and two of her sisters, who were nuns, and considered entering the priesthood. Meanwhile, he compiled the strongest academic record in the history of Martin Van Buren High School. (His mother had been disappointed when he graduated second in his junior high class, and he had vowed to keep her from having "to endure that sort of 'humiliation' again.") Yet by the end of high school, Savio was turning against the church and the educational establishment—or rather, in a pattern he would repeat, holding them to the high standards they ostensibly set for themselves. He wondered why the church had retreated into a dogmatic anticommunism, distancing itself from its commitment to aid the afflicted. Didn't it recognize that the Marxist phrase "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" had "a certain biblical purity"? And he questioned, even as a Westinghouse Science Talent Search finalist, the Sputnik-fueled drive for scientific know-how. Why, he asked its organizers, did they celebrate technical achievement but never invite "a philosopher" to assess its moral value?

By the time he matriculated at Queens College, "Bob" Savio was Mario again and was involving himself in antipoverty work, spending a summer in central Mexico helping to build a town laundry as part of a college volunteer mission. It was only upon his transfer to Berkeley in 1963, after his family's move to Southern California, though, that he connected strongly with the civil rights movement, which satisfied a spiritual hunger in the former altar boy. While his classes seemed a "meaningless ritual," mere "memorizing of meaningless lists of information," the movement was meaning itself—"like God acting in history.... Like God was going to trouble the water." Arrested at a sit-in at the Sheraton Palace hotel in San Francisco, Savio heard from a cellmate about the Freedom Summer Project, which looked to import hundreds of college students into Mississippi to assist the voter registration work there. Soon he was Mississippi-bound.

Notably, his application to join Freedom Summer was received with reservations by the civil rights activist who evaluated it. Savio, he thought, was "not a very creative guy altho he accepts responsibility and carries it through if you explain to him exactly what needs to be done." Savio was not yet the organizer and strategist he would become—but his two months down South, in the thick of the work of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), would change that.

Savio was sent first to Holmes County, a black-majority county where, in 1960, there were only forty-one black voters out of a black population of 19,488. Though he would later be assaulted by two white men with billy clubs in the streets of McComb, Savio recalled that the key event of that summer was an elderly black farmer's attempt to register to vote at a county courthouse:

> [The registrar] started in on him: "What do you want, boy?" He was a man of sixty or seventy. We were just standing there. "What do you want, boy?"
>
> "I want to redish, ma'm." It's part of the dialect. They say "redish." You get used to it....
>
> "What's that you say, boy?
>
> "I want to redish, ma'm."
>
> "What's redish? What are you talking about, boy?... We don't got no redish around here."... And on and on and on about the fact that he couldn't say [register], and she knew perfectly well, he knew perfectly well, what he was there for.... He never gave up. She finally had to give him the form. But she made him eat shit for it.... Here's somebody, who because of something I had done, was maybe risking his [life and his] family['s], facing that kind of humiliation. He must have been afraid. I know I was afraid. Yet he stood his ground.

This moment would be a moral touchstone for Savio throughout his life: the child who grew up straining to pronounce words to those in authority had witnessed a much more severe and politically resonant version of his personal struggle. Over the course of Freedom Summer, Savio came to feel that he had bonded himself to the fate of local folk like this farmer. When he came back to Berkeley and discovered that university administrators, out of their aversion to controversy, had banned political advocacy on campus, he felt that he had no choice but to defy the ban. And given that he had encouraged poor blacks to risk their lives and livelihoods, the university's disciplinary action against him seemed trifling by comparison.

Freedom Summer strengthened Savio's backbone, yet what Savio gained from the experience was less a sense of moral outrage (which, as Cohen notes, seems to have predated his interval down South) and more a repertory of methods for harnessing that outrage and turning it in a constructive direction. From the example of SNCC's Bob Moses, he learned a particular form of public speaking, direct and unadorned, aimed at allowing an audience to put together the pieces for themselves, so that they could take ownership of the movement. "There'd be no harangues," he observed. "It was a rhetoric of telling it like it was, a kind of a Will Rogers rhetoric" of "great concreteness." In the FSM, Savio's speeches often recounted, in exacting detail, the give-and-take between administrators and FSM leaders, allowing his audience to work inductively along with him. He also learned, from SNCC workers who had to face the possibly violent consequences of their organizing, that it was better to admit one's personal struggle than to repress it. As former FSMer Jann Wenner has noted, "Savio seemed to embody not just will but also doubt, and the need to speak and act in the face of doubt."

These sides of Savio—the hyperdemocratic leader who wished not so much to lead as to generate a consensus grounded in facts and moral values; the *engagé* thinker touched with a sense of self-doubt—were invisible to the FSM's opponents in the Berkeley administration. The chancellor, in his first conversation with Savio, deemed him "an intractable fanatic" and never changed his mind; a graduate dean thought he spoke "the language of the gutter." What they failed to comprehend—and what Cohen emphasizes against the grain in his instructive account—was the deliberateness behind

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SAL VEDER/AP

Mario Savio speaks at a People's Park rally on the Berkeley campus, June 26, 1969.

Savio's vehemence: it was as if it existed on a lower frequency that they couldn't hear, jarred as they were by the agitation around them, and so they consistently misjudged the nature and strength of their antagonist. Yet the movement's success depended on this quality. Had Savio and the FSM leadership only been existentialists par excellence, throwing their bodies on the gears of the machine, they would never have been able to win the allegiance of the largely liberal Berkeley student body, much less the only moderately liberal Berkeley faculty, who came after the Greek Theater debacle to back the FSM's demands.

This deliberateness took many forms. It was embedded in the decision-making style of the FSM leadership, whose meetings were marathon efforts in consensus-building, with one lasting almost twenty-four hours—"hyperdemocracy as only the young could practice it," as Cohen says. It shaped the FSM's rallies and sit-ins, which were earnestly educational in spirit: when a large group of fraternity members began hurling lighted cigarettes, eggs and vegetables at the students who had surrounded the police car, Savio did not turn the much larger FSM crowd against them. Instead he explained the principle of civil disobedience to the fraternity brothers, asked if they thought "there are times when questions of conscience exceed in importance questions of law," then invited them to climb atop the police car and speak their mind too.

Last, this deliberateness inflected the "freedom" that the FSM seemed to be asking for. At the FSM rally celebrating the faculty endorsement of the movement's demands, Savio pulled back to consider the self-discipline that students would have to exercise now that the university was not restraining them. Students had won, he said,

> an enormous amount of freedom; and people can say things within that area of freedom that are not responsible. We've finally gotten into a position where we have to consider being responsible because…now we've got the freedom within which to be responsible. And I'd like to say at this time I'm confident that the students, that the faculty, of the University of California will exercise their freedom with the same responsibility they've shown in winning their freedom.

Arguably it was the demand for this sort of "responsible freedom," rather than the more libertarian ideal suggested by the movement's name, that allowed the FSM to carry the day. In March 1965, just after its victory, the FSM leadership was divided when the administration arrested a nonstudent for holding up a "Fuck" sign on campus, and was not able to rally the campus even after the administration suspended students who, in protest, used strategic obscenities (for instance, passages from *Lady Chatterly's Lover*) at an anticensorship rally. A month later, rather than continue this narrower version of its fight, the FSM officially declared itself dissolved. The leadership decided that it had won what it had first demanded—student advocacy rights—and that it was time to move on.

Freedom's Orator leads us, then, into a historical paradox: the radicalism of the FSM—its disruption of campus decorum through sit-ins and the like, its assertion of students as citizens rather than charges of the university—rested on a liberal foundation that much of the FSM's rhetoric insistently undermined. From one perspective, the FSM was reanimating liberal ideals of participatory democracy—the freedoms of speech and association, exercised with consequence—that established liberals seemed to ignore in practice; it offered a true believer's liberalism. From another, it was joining with the Goldwater campaign to delegitimate postwar liberalism, rallying like the Goldwaterites against state-sponsored bureaucracy and helping to popularize the phrase "well-meaning liberal" as a term of disrepute. "'Liberal' is a dirty word here," said FSM leader Jack Weinberg. "Liberalism is a trap. It's the impotence of having principles that make you opposed to something and other principles that keep you from doing anything about it."

While UC administrators consistently underestimated the strength of the FSM, FSM leaders consistently overestimated the strength of the liberal order represented by such figures as Kerr, California Governor Pat Brown and President Lyndon B. Johnson. The FSM abominated Brown as the governor who called in the police to arrest students at the December 2 Sproul sit-in. But at the same time that the FSM was stirring the campus in the fall of 1964, Brown was spending the accumulated political capital of his career gamely trying to rally Californians to defeat Proposition 14, an anti–fair housing measure. The notoriously bad polling numbers of the FSM among the California electorate—74 percent did not approve of the FSM—are brought into a new perspective when we consider that 65 percent of Californians also voted that November for Proposition 14. The glory days of the Brown administration—which, among other things, had presided over the massive expansion of public higher education in the state—were numbered.

Like many political observers of the time, Savio dimly perceived the danger of this gathering conservative storm. In 1966 he dismissed the possibility that the election of Ronald Reagan as governor would have a meaningful impact on California, much less national, politics: "The whole system functions in such a way that nothing new ever happens. It's designed to keep new things from occurring…to institutionalize the end of all historical change." This was naïveté masked as cynicism, but on the other

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hand it's hard to know how Savio and other FSM leaders might have engineered a coalition with liberals in the state and beyond: few entreaties were forthcoming from the other side, and meanwhile the liberal establishment was busy leveraging its credibility into the war in Vietnam, an investment that agitated the campus left into a permanent opposition. Sproul Plaza—the central space on the Berkeley campus, which the FSM had won for free speech—was consumed for the rest of the decade by Vietnam.

The late '60s and early '70s were a troubled time for Savio. He was seized by panic attacks and sank into a deep depression; the ordeals of his childhood and the responsibilities of marriage and fatherhood weighed on him intensely. When his marriage broke up in November 1971, he recalled, "I did too. I spent a long time in a psychiatric hospital." The death of his mother triggered a suicide attempt. Cohen is careful not to over-speculate on the exact causes of Savio's depression, registering the reluctance of Savio's friends and family to discuss this interval in his life, but he convincingly adduces that it had a political dimension. The FSM had centered Savio's life, and its late-'60s transformation left him swimming against some of its strongest currents.

Even as Savio understood that the Vietnam War called for a systemic analysis of American power in the world, he reacted strongly against what he saw as the creeping dogmatism of the left. "For an apostate Catholic," he recalled, "shopping in the dense… thicket of neo-Marxist sects was altogether too painfully like selecting a Protestant denomination." And: "It became increasingly difficult to know what the speakers were saying…. I found it increasingly difficult in fact [to believe] that *the speakers* knew what they were saying." Yet the mode of speaking that Savio had honed over the course of the FSM—based in vivid reporting of his encounters with administrative power—was hard to adapt to the antiwar movement, where the masters of war were sealed away far from the protesters. And a mission to Hanoi held little charm for him: Savio admired the Vietnamese National Liberation Front for its struggle against US imperial power, but as a lover of free speech he could not idealize life under its regime.

Savio's relationship with the late-'60s left was bittersweet, not hostile. With his dual commitments to nonviolence and participatory democracy in the movement, he looked askance at groups like the Black Panthers, with their rhetoric of freeing Huey Newton "by any means necessary." "I don't think the revolution in America depends on burning down half the city of Oakland to free one man," he said. "Almost all are in jail unfairly." But he recognized that he had not been able to square the circle himself: the project of articulating a united New Left, bound by its commitment to nonviolence and its resistance to inequality, eluded him. He planned to write a book in which he would translate Marxist insights on imperialism and inequality "into ordinary American English," while criticizing more doctrinaire formulations, but never completed it. A campaign to run for mayor of Berkeley in 1971 was similarly abandoned before the race began.

Notwithstanding its declaration of victory in 1965, the FSM also left behind a good deal of unfinished business. Its most clear-cut legacy is the liberalized atmosphere on the Berkeley campus and others across the United States. Despite early attempts by Berkeley administrations to shut down the political carnival of Sproul Plaza, it has become a mostly shared point of pride—a public sphere that offers a bazaar of causes, from the Campus Crusade for Christ to the International Socialist Organization, as well as a venue for large-scale mobilizations.

FSM leaders consistently overestimated the strength of the liberal political order.

But is "free speech" truly free? On the one hand, the polarization of US politics has meant that, on the Berkeley campus at least, conservative speakers have a difficult time getting a respectful hearing. Savio, for one, objected when audience members booed US Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick off a Berkeley stage in 1983, despite his loathing of the Reaganite policies toward Central America that she sponsored, because he felt that her free speech rights had been violated. Making a distinction that contemporary campus administrators would appreciate, Savio drew a line between "heckling" (raising hard questions in a challenging manner) and "disruption" (preventing speakers from delivering their remarks), and asked protesters to stay on the heckling side of the divide.

On the other hand, campus administrators continue to see direct-action protests as seedbeds of anarchy and are quick to deploy squadrons of police rather than engage substantively with dissenting members of the campus community. This past November 20, a student-led occupation of a Berkeley classroom—a response to campus budget cuts—prompted the administration to surround the building with a ring of police from Alameda County and the city of Berkeley, which in turn prompted a crowd of more than a thousand to gather around the building. In the tense stand-off, police fired rubber bullets at one demonstrator and injured the hand of another, who had made the mistake of holding onto a barricade so that she could keep her footing. Those of us outside the building were kept informed through Twitter and text messages bouncing between the occupiers and the crowd—messages, among other things, about police abuse and possible plans to rush the barricades (which fortunately were answered with appeals to nonviolence).

Meanwhile, thirty years of conservative counterrevolution have made even some campus progressives yearn for the leadership of Clark Kerr, the "Machiavellian Quaker" who pushed through (in retrospect) a stunning public investment in higher education. In October labor historian Nelson Lichtenstein launched a UC Santa Barbara teach-in on the crisis of public higher education in California with a paean to Kerr's "forgotten legacy." Savio saw Kerr as a bureaucrat who believed that history had ended; Lichtenstein claimed him as a "visionary" who believed that "mass higher education" was "the key to a dynamic, harmonious society based on skill and knowledge"—and who secured public financing for a history-making expansion of the UC system, adding three entirely new campuses and greatly expanding another, while holding to the principle that no students should have to pay tuition to attend the university. Speech may not have been free in Savio's time, but public higher education largely was (at least for the predominantly white young people tracked into the system): Berkeley undergraduates in the fall of 1964 paid only $220 per year in fees, or around $1,500 in today's dollars. By the standards of our age, the administrative Kerr of 1960 was a brazen utopian, predicting that Americans in 1984 would have a four-day workweek and 50 percent more income, and imagining a vastly more equal economic order in the United States.

By contrast, the current UC president, Mark Yudof, has been intellectually uninspired, politically clumsy and administratively heavy-handed—a combination that has alienated faculty, staff and students, and left

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the UC system reeling from the $600 million slashed from its budget by the state. Even Savio, who accused the university of being an "autocracy," might have been dumbfounded when Yudof publicly claimed "emergency powers" as his first response to the budget crisis; when he appointed no faculty with recent experience in an undergraduate classroom to a much-heralded "Commission on the Future" of the UC system; and when he saddled students with the bill for the budget gap, raising undergraduate fees by 32 percent (to $10,333, up from $3,429 a decade ago).

Aptly, Savio's last political fight involved this very issue of increased student fees. Part of his life's noble second act—in which he made up for his earlier nonchalance about Reagan's ascendancy by throwing himself into campaigns against US policy in Central America, the dismantling of affirmative action and the denial of immigrant rights—the fee controversy might seem minor. The administration at Sonoma State University, where Savio taught in the 1990s as a math and philosophy instructor, had proposed a $300 fee hike to help cover annual budget shortfalls. But Savio saw the fee increase as a sign of a broader movement away from the promise of accessible higher education—a promise broken just as California's college-age population became unmistakably more racially diverse—and rallied students to defeat the measure. On November 1, 1996, he debated the fee hike's proponents at a public forum. The next day, after feverishly working to prepare a set of legal documents on the fee increase, he collapsed from a heart attack and fell into a coma, dying four days later in the hospital. Two weeks after Savio's death, at 53, Sonoma State's students rejected the fee hike, formerly a popular measure, by a 58 percent majority.

During the fall of 1964, Savio carried in his pocket a copy of J.L. Austin's *Sense and Sensibilia*, which argued that speech did not merely describe reality but shaped and invented it. The FSM—and Savio's oratory within it—made Austin's point blazingly clear. But Savio also inscribed the book with a quote from the Spanish baroque dramatist Pedro Calderón de la Barca that suggested, with a certain melancholy idealism, the competing allure of the world of dreams: "I am dreaming, and I want to do good. For the good you do is never lost. Not even in dreams." If public higher education is going to thrive beyond the current mean season, we will have to draw on Savio's actions and his dreams—all while finding even better strategies for uniting the two. ■

COURTESY MICHAEL ROSENFELD GALLERY, NEW YORK CITY

King and Queen of Diamonds (1964), by Romare Bearden

Dimensions of the Abyss

by BARRY SCHWABSKY

In October 1699 a ship called the *Liverpool Merchant* set sail for Africa, proceeding thence to Barbados with a cargo of 220 slaves. Among the ship's owners was Sir Thomas Johnson, who that same year joined with a movement of slave traders to establish Liverpool as an independent parish. And so the port city in what was then still part of Lancashire was initiated into the Triangular Trade. Between 1700 and 1807, about 1.5 million African slaves were transported across the Atlantic on ships that had set sail from Liverpool. Controlling 40 percent of the European slave trade and a similar proportion of the world's trade in general, Liverpool rivaled London in terms of wealth.

The grandiose architectural offspring of the city's former shipping might are still visible on its waterfront. One of the more recent is the Cunard Building, completed in 1917 in ornate Italian Renaissance style. The Canadian-born Samuel Cunard had parlayed a contract for transatlantic mail shipment into the world's most prestigious passenger cruise line; he represents an era in which Liverpool's maritime industry had sloughed off the shame of the slave trade. His great-granddaughter Nancy Cunard was an energetic promoter of literary and artistic Modernism who also edited the 1934 collection *Negro: An Anthology*, a landmark of the Harlem Renaissance that has been called "the first publication to voice freely perspectives and ideologies from diaspora blacks and Africans."

If there is any doubt that coming to terms with this history remains painful, consider what happened in 2006 when the Liverpool city council decided that street names linked to the slave trade should be changed to honor abolitionists. When it emerged that Penny Lane, the subject of the famous Beatles song, was named for an eighteenth-century owner of slave ships who testified in favor of the slave trade before Parliament, and that it therefore would be one of those

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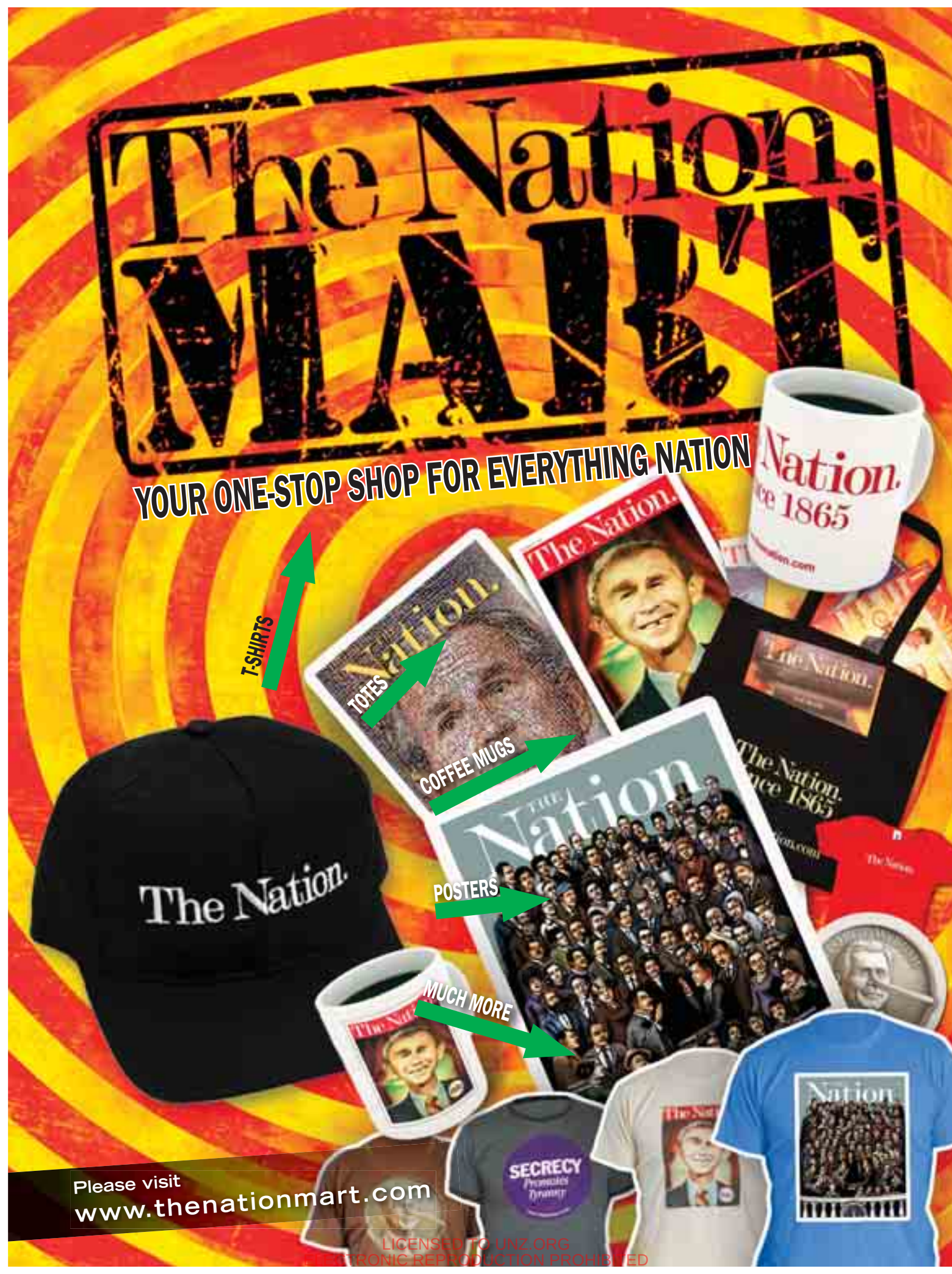

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renamed, there were howls of rage. "Few songs are lodged in the national psyche like Penny Lane," the *Guardian* conceded. "Penny Lane should keep its name, but its fame should be used to make people aware of its shameful history." (In a letter to the editor one of the paper's Australian readers took sweet reason to even greater lengths: "The solution to the Penny Lane problem is obvious: commemorate the song instead and rename it Penny Lane Lane.") The street remains Penny Lane, and tourists still go there looking for the shelter in the middle of a roundabout.

Tate Liverpool is located in a considerably less flamboyant structure than the Cunard Building, a former warehouse in the Albert Dock, but given the city's history it is hard to think of a more apt setting for its current exhibition, "Afro Modern: Journeys Through the Black Atlantic" (on view through April 25). As the subtitle discloses, the exhibition takes its inspiration from British sociologist Paul Gilroy's groundbreaking 1993 book, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Thanks to its international reach, Gilroy's notion of the Black Atlantic offered one of the most suggestive distillations to date of an idea that was broadly articulated by Alain Locke nearly seventy years earlier, that "to be 'Negro' in the cultural sense" is "to be distinctively composite." It's peculiar, then, that Gilroy is not among the contributors to the exhibition catalog. (Music and the written word, rather than the visual arts, have been Gilroy's primary cultural sources, as reaffirmed by his provocative new book *Darker Than Blue: On the Moral Economies of Black Atlantic Culture*, with its more somber view of the cultural scene Gilroy evoked in 1993.) By the same token, as Courtney Martin points out in her contribution to the catalog, even before Gilroy, Robert Farris Thompson had written of a "black Atlantic visual tradition"—though Thompson is not a contributor either.

While it seems evident that the violent yet galvanizing conjuncture of European and African elements in, mostly, the Americas has produced a world-historical transformation of musical culture, and an unprecedented politics of liberation as well, its effects on visual art have been more difficult to measure. The profound effect that African tribal sculpture had on Matisse, Picasso and European and then international Modernism in general is well-known. But to what extent was this the beginning of a broader transformation, one with consequences not only for white European artists but for artists in Africa and in the African diaspora in Europe and the Americas? To what extent, that is, can we speak not simply of a Euro-American encounter with African art but of a mutually transformative encounter of European, African and diasporic cultures? These are the kinds of questions at stake in "Afro Modern," and while the exhibition can only begin to pose, not answer, them, the very fact that they are being asked is already a considerable achievement.

The exhibition's first section, "Black Atlantic Avant-Gardes," juxtaposes works of very different sorts. Paintings, drawings and sculpture by Picasso, Brancusi, Léger and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff illustrate the astonished Western discovery of African art, as do Walker Evans's photographs of tribal masks. There is also evidence of the social response to the increasing black presence in Europe: a print of Josephine Baker performing in her famous banana skirt; a caricature of an interracial couple dressed to the nines. (The drawing, in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery in London, is identified as "probably" Nancy Cunard and her lover, the black musician Henry Crowder; but according to Crowder's biographer, Anthony Barnett, it is not them.)

This is already a very mixed bag. Picasso, most notably, was inspired by African art to foment a thoroughgoing revision of the very syntax of representation—a revision that the others, Brancusi perhaps most of all, seized on with relish for its potential to be subjected to their highly personal reinterpretations. Paul Colin's lithe, stylish impression of La Baker has no such ambitions. Also in this section are works from the 1920s by white South American artists who employ Modernist stylization—the Brazilian Tarsila do Amaral had studied with Léger in Paris—and the awkward rhythms of folk art to observe the black cultures around them, and above all works by black artists of the Harlem Renaissance, who, to one degree or another, were productively reacting to both Modernist and African art. Naturally, these artists appreciated the latter with a "double consciousness," to borrow W.E.B. Du Bois's famous phrase: as the heritage they were eager to reclaim and as a source of the Modernist syntax, which at least some of them viewed as the means to effect that reclamation or in any case as a stylistic badge of the contemporaneity of their artistic quest. Here I was particularly taken with two sculptures by Ronald Moody, a Jamaican-born British sculptor whose work I had not known before. His *Midonz* (1937) is a massive female head of carved elm that persuasively demonstrates that Modernist reduction could reveal a timeless serenity not unlike that of archaic Greek sculpture. Moody's works were shown alongside those of his American colleagues at the Baltimore Museum of Art in 1939 in an exhibition of "Contemporary Negro Art," but his works in "Afro Modern" have a stylistic authority that the Americans' lack.

The next stage in the evolution traced by the exhibition is titled "Black Orpheus: Negritude, Creolization, Natural Synthesis." The term "negritude" was coined, of course, by Aimé Césaire in the mid-'30s, but the period covered at the Tate is roughly the mid-'40s through the mid-'60s—essentially the era in which Europe's former colonies in Africa were gaining independence and black consciousness was manifesting renewed élan. This was the beginning of what would later be called Afrocentric thinking. It's at this juncture in the exhibition that modern African artists (rather than the anonymous makers of tribal artifacts) appear for the first time. By the same token, Maya Deren's film *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*, assembled after her death from footage shot in 1947–51, exemplifies a new turn in the white avant-garde's involvement with "exotic" black cultures. It was no longer a matter of connoisseurial rummaging in Parisian flea markets but of a pilgrimage to the source, and a concomitantly heightened sense of the embeddedness of masks and other objects in ritual.

The "Natural Synthesis" of the section title refers to the ideas of Nigerian artist and theorist Uche Okeke, whose take on negritude emphasized contemporaneity and heterogeneity over tradition and authenticity. Cuban, Brazilian and American artists held similar goals, but as hopeful as such a synthesis of old and new African and European influences may sound, the results often seem strangely bloodless—something that could hardly be said of the succeeding section, "Dissident Identities: Radicalism, Resistance and Marginality," which features works reflecting the civil rights and black power movements of the '60s. The polemics here hardly seem dated, and are not limited to black artists; Andy Warhol's 1964 silkscreen print *Birmingham Race Riot* is right at home with Adrian Piper's 1975 drawing *I Embody Everything You Most Hate and Fear*. But within this countercultural uproar, another theme begins to emerge in counterpoint to overtly racial concerns: gender politics. Art historian Judith Wilson is quoted to explain that Romare Bearden's extraordinary collages—which have been looking more and more relevant again of late—"recuperate the black female body, wresting it from the clutches of white purveyors of erotic

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fantasies about exotic Others, and reposition it in relation to black vernacular culture." No doubt, but this still leaves open the issues of inequality within that culture.

A different view of the black female body emerges in a work by a woman artist—Piper's *Food for the Spirit* (1971). This sequence of murky black-and-white images showing Piper photographing herself in a mirror evokes a self-confrontation that involves opacity more than clarity, unknowing as much as enlightenment. The artist/philosopher's gaze, seemingly troubled and doubtful, is toward and for herself; she looks forward but not outward, and the viewer becomes marginal—not a voyeur, yet neither welcomed nor challenged. Her nakedness seems to speak less about sexuality or gender than of a reduced and isolated sense of self.

The exhibition's last three sections, "Reconstructing the Middle Passage: Diaspora and Memory," "Exhibiting Bodies: Racism, Rationalism and Pseudo-Science" and "From Post-Modern to Post-Black: Appropriation, Black Humour and Double Negatives," bring the story of the Black Atlantic up to the present with works dating mostly from the past two decades. The multiplication of categories suggests that the present and immediate past are harder to encapsulate than previous eras—which is always the case—but also reminds us that the complexities of history, and the strategies for dealing with them, are essentially the same as forty years ago: mourning, protest and humor are still of the essence. In retrospect, "post-black"—a term coined by curator Thelma Golden of the Studio Museum in Harlem and artist Glenn Ligon—represents a depth and complexity of ambivalence that exceeds any merely double consciousness, and typically characterizes much of the strongest black art. That's why I say Bearden is a central figure. It is hard not to have mixed feelings about his formally and semiotically dense and raw concatenations of imagery, and those mixed feelings amplify rather than dissipate the work's appeal. His influence on an artist like Wangechi Mutu is most patent, but it's not hard to find in many of the other relatively younger artists here (few are under 40), such as Ellen Gallagher, Kara Walker and Chris Ofili. The collage-based conflation of the pornographic and the sacred, suspending judgment, critique and satire, in Ofili's *The Holy Virgin Mary* (1996)—the painting (now on view at Tate Britain in London) that caused such a foolish ruckus when the "Sensation" exhibition came to the Brooklyn Museum in 1999—is as raucously Beardenesque as you could want.

By contrast, Judith Wilson's desire to offer a politically righteous alibi for Bearden's unresolvable little pictorial desire machines seems like a turn away from the risk and exposure of the post-black position that was already implicitly his. To some extent, this is true of the exhibition as a whole. The downside of its laudable ambition is the need to thematize everything and to seek out what has already been thematized at the expense of what resists explication. In the "Afro Modern" catalog, the great Martinican writer Édouard Glissant explains in

COURTESY VICTORIA MIRO GALLERY, LONDON © CHRIS OFILI

Chris Ofili's *Afrodizzia (Second Version)*, from 1996

an interview that "a person has the right to be opaque," and this is because "a racist is someone who refuses what he doesn't understand." Glissant's insight is profound but painfully hard to act on. An exhibition like "Afro Modern" tends to refuse what is opaque. Another way to put it would be to remember Stuart Hall's plea in an essay published in 1996: "I ask you to note how, within the black repertoire, *style*—which mainstream cultural critics often believe to be the mere husk, the wrapping, the sugar-coating on the pill—has become *itself* the subject of what is going on." What Glissant calls opacity is inseparable from what Hall calls style. The need to find clearly marked subject matter tends to deflect attention from the importance of style as such.

One way that this inattention manifests itself in the exhibition is through the near suppression of abstract art. Rubem Valentim's paintings are didactic illustrations of how abstraction might absorb forms redolent of Afro-Brazilian culture but feel like a compromise more than a real synthesis. "Afro Modern" includes pieces by other artists who worked abstractly, such as Norman Lewis and Frank Bowling, but pieces in which abstract motifs are allegorically overlaid with more overt topical content. Their abstract works, not to mention those of artists like Alma Thomas, Beauford Delaney, Sam Gilliam, Martin Puryear, Leonardo Drew and Mark Bradford, are essential to any visual survey of the Black Atlantic. I also wonder about missing figures such as William H. Johnson, Robert Colescott (another of Léger's students, by the way), Barkley Hendricks and Kerry James Marshall, whose works are far from abstract but which exemplify stylistic peaks that I felt as sore absences in this context. I mention American examples because that is the context I know best, but the examples could multiply internationally. Moreover, the focus on subject matter over style means that some artists are represented by weaker work than they should be. A prime example is Jacob Lawrence, here with an African street scene from 1964, which serves to illustrate the growing ties between black American artists and the mother continent at the time. But Lawrence's greatest paintings are his early ones, from the late '30s and early '40s, and those are the ones that helped make a future for Black Atlantic style. Wifredo Lam is rightly presented in the catalog as the premier artist of negritude, but you'd never know it from the minor examples of his work in the exhibition. Likewise, from the single photograph exhibited here, the viewer has no way to understand what has made Isaac Julien such a significant artist and filmmaker over the past two decades; his idiosyncratic compound of extreme aestheticism and moral intensity cuts across all invidious dualisms.

Few artists today exemplify style—and its opacity—as acutely as Chris Ofili. His current retrospective at Tate Britain (through May 16) underlines the fearlessness it takes to let your work go that far. It's also a good reminder of how in-your-face blatancy can be just as good a vehicle for opacity and style as ambiguity and nuance. Ofili knows it. As he tells interviewer Ekow Eshun in his solo catalog, "Sometimes though, I'm just blindingly obvious, an example being *Afrodizzia*. Like, bang, there it is. Afro head—celebration of Afrocentricity." You can be that obvious with style, of course, if you've got a lot more going on than just what you're being so obvious about. *Afrodizzia (Second version)* belongs to the first phase of Ofili's work, or anyway the earliest phase shown here, in which imagery is subsumed by pattern and the play of materials. Col-

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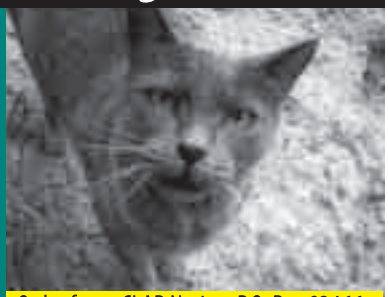

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laged to its surface are, indeed, a plethora of heads with Afro haircuts—dozens of them, maybe hundreds. You can never lose sight of them, not for a minute, but there is so much more going on in the painting: the collaged heads are just one layer in a dense commotion of optical, linguistic and tactile elements (including the famous varnished balls of elephant dung) that manage to create a coherent visual field only by the skin of their teeth. The thrill of the painting is that, miraculously, the elements do cohere.

Painted in the same year, *The Holy Virgin Mary* is part of the next phase of Ofili's development. Figurative drawing—flat and posterlike but with great bravura and proffering a single, centralized, iconic image—rather than pattern dominates, and to a great extent visual coherence comes more easily. But in compensation, the paintings become more complex emotionally. Mixed feelings about women come to the fore. *The Holy Virgin Mary* could have been a simple illustration of the age-old virgin/whore dichotomy—except, where's the dichotomy? Carnality and the spirit simply coexist, with no resolution of their potential contradictions, and none sought. By 1999 Ofili seems to have become interested in synthesizing his new figurative content with his earlier emphasis on abstract pattern. This doesn't always succeed—*The Upper Room* (1999–2002), a chapel-like installation of thirteen paintings (on the model of Christ surrounded by the Twelve Apostles, but here substituted by rhesus macaques), is grandiose rather than raucous when it probably should have been both. But what's intriguing about Ofili's best paintings of this period—from *Prince Amongst Thieves* (1999) to *Afro Sunrise* (2002-03)—is how they start to feel like their own camouflage. Their visual density heightens one's awareness that they contain more than one can easily make out, but it also suggests that density itself might be the main thing to see, to accept. There is much hidden in these paintings, and you always feel as though there's something inside them that might be looking out at you, spying, as much as you're looking at the paintings.

Then, between 2003 and 2006, comes a break from painting, though not from drawing. In 2005 Ofili moved from England to Port of Spain, Trinidad, a place where he had no roots, although his friend and fellow painter Peter Doig, who had spent his childhood there, had returned a few years earlier. There are curious parallels in the effect that moving to the island has had on the painters. Doig and Ofili paint very differently, but one thing their paintings have had in common is that they were built from the micro level up, their images like condensations of innumerable small marks, swarms of punctual sensations. Slowly, after Doig moved to Trinidad, his paintings began to clear out, to become broader and more open, and at the same time more mysterious. Something similar has happened with Ofili, but more suddenly. Starting in 2006, there is a sequence of close-valued, dark-blue paintings whose imagery, stylized in a way that recalls German Expressionism, can be very difficult to make out. Perhaps the most legible is *Iscariot Blues* (2006). Judas, the Gospel of Matthew tells us, ended his shame by hanging himself. Here the gaunt, naked body hangs broken-necked as he is serenaded, or so it seems, by a pair of musicians. It's an eerie and terrible image that to some extent makes one grateful for the deeper opacity of some of the other blue paintings.

Other recent Ofili paintings use a wider range of hues with more contrast, but still with these expressionistic distortions of the figure. Not only has Ofili transformed his technique, and the surface quality of his paintings, but the nature of his drawn line has changed as well. Before it was rounded, voluptuous, seductive; now it is tense and elongated. Ofili speaks of "a very particular mystery" that he derives from the Trinidadian landscape, adding, "Essentially there's a joy I feed off." And yet the paintings are not joyous, at least not in the way so many of his earlier, more insouciantly bad-boyish ones were. At best, perhaps, one can speak of an *amor fati*. There is something haunted in these paintings, a sense of fatality that was not there before. And with that, a sense of existential weight. The imagery in these paintings is not iconic, as in earlier works like *The Holy Virgin Mary*. Instead it conjures up narratives, though of unclear purport. There is a sense of hidden dramas, of fables with secrets. This affinity with the riddling quality of legend or parable recalls the art of Bob Thompson, the American painter of the '60s—another of those figures who might have been worth including in "Afro Modern" but wasn't. The paintings evoke, whether Ofili realizes it or not, a thought that Glissant has explained in this way: "The Africans in the New World—African-Americans, but also the Antilleans, Brazilians, etc.—escaped the abyss and carry within them the abyss's dimensions." Ofili's heritage is otherwise—his family having come to England from Nigeria in the 1960s, they are not part of the diaspora that endured the middle passage and slavery—yet in the Caribbean he seems to have glimpsed and been affected by the dimensions of that abyss. ■

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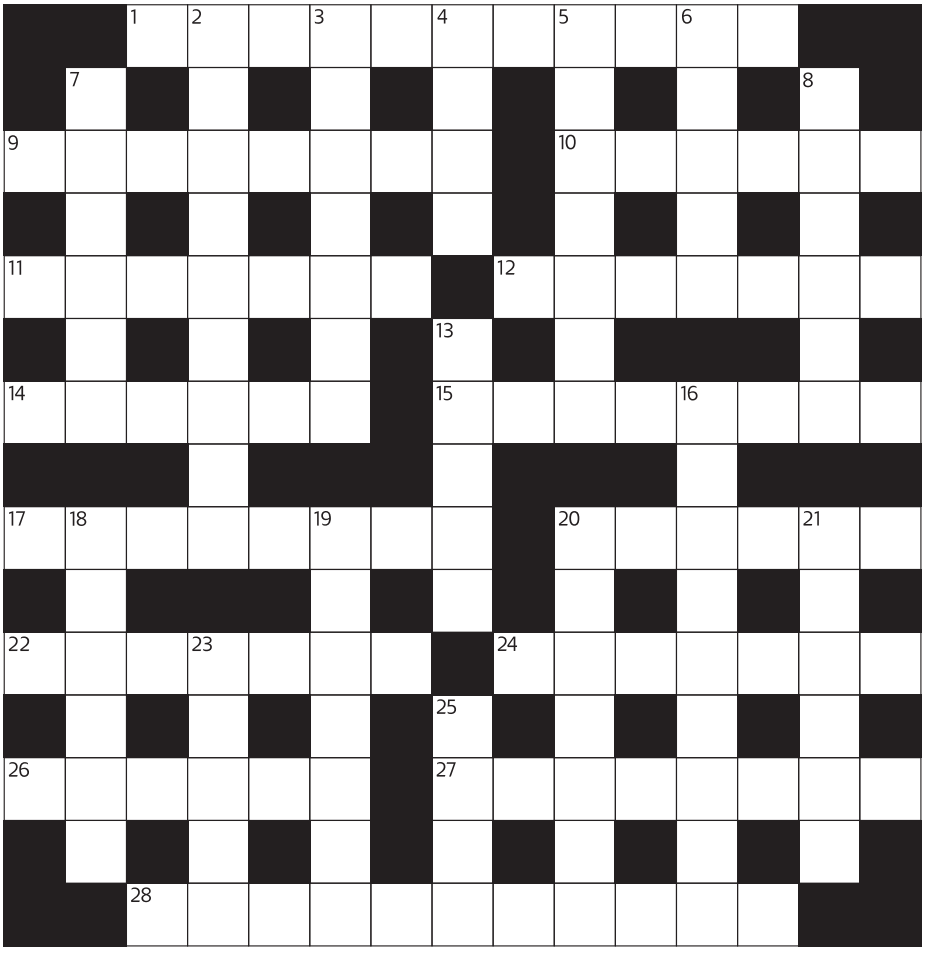

ACROSS

1 Bars weren't able to hold her back, but the place you bought this from obviously does! (5,6)

9 Furnishing something for one's extremity. (8)

10 Jackson, for example, was a sort of 18. (6)

11 Heels. (7)

12 This sort of trade is on horseback. (7)

14 Didn't go supported. (6)

15 This might test your resistance. (8)

17 Is such a statement made when one cleans up? (8)

20 Associated. (6)

22 See 13

24 England was in 1664. (7)

26 In the eye, or near it. (6)

27 Think hard for this! (8)

28 Such handiwork should be found in the North, if one considers the compass. (6-5)

DOWN

2 A Percy, the original in fact. (9)

3 Terror did once, in greed as well. (7)

4 Goads horses. (4)

5 Ran in most peculiarly to what a modest person seldom overlooks. (7)

6 1, 2 and 3 are in this class. (5)

7 So is the gate, and narrow is the way. (6)

8 Busy with what sounds like an award. (6)

13 and **22** Fellow-Red, perhaps. (5,7)

16 To impart knowledge to a sort of 18 and 50 (changing a compass heading). (9)

18 Wander in confusion. (6)

19 Sherbet on top, ground under. (7)

20 The ballet implies rapid movement. (7)

21 They start off Even-Steven. (6)

23 Israel lost one once. (5)

25 A wise one is sometimes a fool. (4)

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